Vol. XIV. No. 2 DECEMBER, 1946

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

D. W. HARDING F. R. LEAVIS
L. C. KNIGHTS W. H. MELLERS

CONTENTS

Page

M. CAMUS AND THE TRAGIC HERO, by *H. A. Mason* 82

THE RHYTHMICAL INTENTION IN WYATT'S POETRY, by *D. W. Harding* 90

GEORGE ELIOT (IV): 'DANIEL DERONDA' AND 'THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY', by *F. R. Leavis* 102

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 131

HENRY JAMES AND THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION (p. 131). 'THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT' (p. 133). AN IRISH MONTHLY (p. 134). 'THE KENYON REVIEW' AND 'SCRUTINY' (p. 134). FOR WHOM DO UNIVERSITIES EXIST? (p. 136).

A PASSAGE TO PALESTINE, *Thieves in the Night* reviewed by Q. D. Leavis (p. 138). ELIOT'S HEIR, *A Map of Verona* and *The Garden* reviewed by G. D. Klingopulos (p. 141). MODERN POETIC DRAMA, *The Poet in the Theatre* reviewed by R. G. COX (p. 145). GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE, *Choix de Poésie* and *Apollinaire* reviewed by G. D. Klingopulos (p. 149). THE SIGHTS OF CONEY ISLAND, *The Cosmological Eye* reviewed by R. G. Lienhardt (p. 154). THE ENGLISH KAFKA, *The Cult of Power* reviewed by H. A. Mason (p. 156). RECORDS, reviews by W.H.M. (p. 159).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

M. CAMUS AND THE TRAGIC HERO[1]

IT is a curiosity of contemporary French literature that there are at least three prose writers who have each published a philosophical essay, a play and a novel. M. Albert Camus has written, besides the works under review, two plays, *Le Malentendu*, *Caligula* and an 'Essai sur l'absurde' entitled *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. Some comparatively immature essays have been collected and published under the title *Les Noces*. Although M. Camus is often bracketed for publicity purposes with Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre as an 'Existentialist', the grouping has about as much significance as that which used to link Messrs. Auden, Day Lewis and Spender. The three French writers all have a 'philosophy' which they illustrate in plays and novels. M. Camus (who once 'taught' philosophy) holds very interesting views about 'l'absurde', which, though not apparently[2] cogent as 'pure philosophy', represent an attitude towards life and death shared by many people in our times. 'Les pages qui suivent traitent d'une sensibilité absurde qu'on peut trouver éparse dans le siècle—et non d'une philosophie absurde que notre temps, à proprement parler, n'a pas connue. Il est donc d'une honnêteté élémentaire de marquer, pour commencer, ce qu'elles doivent à certains esprits contemporains'.[3] In spite of this M. Camus deserves consideration on his own merits.

In dealing with a writer who has a professed 'philosophy' which he can formulate in essays and articles, it is natural to look first at the quality of the 'thought' in the novel, taking thought in its widest sense of a total attitude. M. Camus, I think, intended *The Outsider* to be a vehicle for his philosophy in this non-technical, human sense. Besides this, another kind of thought went to the making of this novel. It has the rare virtue of being thought out from the first page to the last, indeed, the last page is involved in the first. The novel has the further rhetorical grace of yielding its full meaning only at the end, so that it must be read through again to grasp its total significance. The author is firmly in command and keeps his material at a proper distance by a controlled, lucid style with only occasional 'literary' passages.

The story of *The Outsider* is told in the first person by a young clerk, Meursault, living in Algiers. Three years ago he had put

---

[1] *L'Etranger*, by Albert Camus (Gallimard).
The Outsider, by Albert Camus (Hamish Hamilton, 6/-).
Lettres a un Ami Allemand, by Albert Camus (Gallimard).

[2] According to Mr. A. J. Ayer in *Horizon*, March, 1946.

[3] From the preface to *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his mother into a home for the aged at Marengo. When the novel begins his mother has just died and he attends her funeral. On his return to Algiers he goes to a swimming pool and there he meets Marie, a former typist in his office. They go to a comic film in the evening and later to bed. The girl would like to get married and the hero, though not enthusiastic, is willing. Before this, however, Meursault consents to assist a pimp, Raymond, in a squabble with one of his female victims. They strike up a friendship and with Marie go to the seaside on the following Saturday. They are followed there by a group of Arabs, friends of the injured woman's brother. There is a fight, the Arab slashes Raymond, but they separate and Meursault takes away Raymond's revolver. Later he goes for a stroll and without thinking returns to the spot where they had met the Arabs. The sun is now at its height. The hero is blinded by perspiration and when the Arab flashes a knife, Meursault shoots him and empties the revolver into his dead body.

The 'case' might possibly have ended there with a verdict of homicide in extenuating circumstances. But the hero's answers to the examining magistrate shock his Christian feelings. The magistrate extends his enquiries to the events preceding the murder and thus all the apparently trivial happenings of the time since the death of Madame Meursault take on a new meaning. This is fully brought out at the trial where the hero secures his own condemnation by sticking to what he believes to be the truth. He refuses to receive the consolations of religion and assaults the chaplain who comes to visit him in his cell. His last wish is for a reviling crowd to witness his execution.

This story might have been taken from the newspapers, just as Stendhal is reported to have discovered in a newspaper the crime story he worked up in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. The most salient difference is that in *The Outsider* the point of the story does not lie in the conflict between the hero and conventional society. As Meursault's outburst at the end of the novel clearly shows, he is a metaphysical and not a social martyr. His tragedy is that of all men, or rather of all men who share M. Camus's beliefs. The critical passage is spoken to the prison chaplain.

> 'Rien, rien n'avait d'importance et je savais bien pourquoi. Lui aussi savait pourquoi. Du fond de mon avenir, pendant toute cette vie absurde que j'avais menée, un souffle obscur remontait vers moi à travers des années qui n'étaient pas encore venues et ce souffle égalisait sur son passage tout ce qu'on me proposait alors dans les années pas plus réelles que je vivais. Que m'importaient la mort des autres, l'amour d'une mère, que m'importaient son dieu, les vies qu'on choisit, les destins qu'on élit, puisqu'un seul destin devait m'élire, moi-même et avec moi des milliards de privilégiés qui, comme lui, se disaient mes frères. Comprenait-il, comprenait-il donc? Tout le monde était privilégié. Il n'y avait que des privilégiés. Les autres aussi on les condamnerait un jour. Lui aussi on le condamnerait.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Qu'importait si accusé de meurtre il était exécuté pour n'avoir pas pleuré à l'enterrement de sa mère . . . Qu'importait que Raymond fût mon copain autant que Céleste qui valait mieux que lui? Qu'importait que Marie donnât aujourd'hui sa bouche à un nouveau Meursault?'

The substance of this argument is a commonplace of Christian moralists, only they use it to condemn the unbeliever's way of life. The 'Outsider', however, regards it as a justification and cries out in triumph, ' . . . j'étais sûr de moi, sûr de tout, plus sûr que lui, sûr de ma vie et de cette mort qui allait venir. Oui, je n'avais que cela. Mais du moins, je tenais cette vérité autant qu'elle me tenait. J'avais eu raison, j'avais encore raison, j'avais toujours raison'.

There are three main arguments to be considered. The first is, that certain things usually considered important are really unimportant. Secondly, there are certain values, but it is a matter of indifference whether we pursue or neglect them. And behind the confident affirmation there is a belief in certain positive values which remain unaffected by the inevitability of death.

Before going into these points it will be as well to dismiss a misapprehension about the way we are to take the hero. The public prosecutor describes him as a monster. 'Il disait qu'à la vérité, je n'en avais point d'âme, et que rien d'humain, et pas un des principes moraux qui gardent le coeur des hommes ne m'était accessible'. Mr. Connolly in his introduction says, 'According to one critic, the Outsider himself represents the drying up of all bourgeois sources of sensation, and the complete decadence of renaissance man; he is a "poor white" '. Meursault says of himself, 'j'étais comme tout le monde, absolument comme tout le monde'. (Only, of course, he intuitively understood that life was 'absurd'). He was perhaps a little different in that, as he says, 'j'avais un peu perdu l'habitude de m'interroger' and that he never spoke unless he had something worth saying, which was not often.

Other critics have made a fuss over the lack of 'inner life' displayed by the hero. It seems to me that we should regard the lack of self-conscious reflection as a device of concentration. It also allows M. Camus to evade some awkward questions, for his hero is not the Dumb Ox some critics have made him out to be. 'Je n'ai jamais eu de véritable imagination', he says, but the point of the remark is Wordsworthian.

> He had as much imagination
> As a pint-pot;—he never could
> Fancy another situation,
> From which to dart his contemplation
> Than that wherein he stood.

As we shall see, the hero glories in his attachment to the here and now.

So I think we should take Meursault to be the hero, the worthy representative of a serious attitude to life. M. Camus has chosen

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to make him less articulate about what he stands for than about what he regards as unimportant: 'je n'étais peut-être pas sûr de ce qui m'intéressait réellement, mais j'étais tout à fait sûr de ce qui ne m'intéressait pas'. He has, for example, no illusions about romantic love: ' . . . elle m'a demandé si je l'aimais. Je lui ai répondu que cela ne voulait rien dire . . . '—or about marriage: 'Elle a observé alors que le mariage était une chose grave. J'ai répondu: "Non" '. He is indifferent about travelling and living in Paris. Even killing: 'J'ai pensé à ce moment qu'on pouvait tirer ou ne pas tirer et que tout cela se valait'. Consequently the extra bullets he had fired into the corpse do not in his eyes require explanation: 'ce dernier point n'avait pas tellement d'importance'. The murder inspires 'un certain ennui' rather than regret. 'Je n'avais jamais pu regretter vraiment quelque chose. J'étais toujours pris par ce qui allait arriver, par aujourd'hui ou par demain'. Unlike one of James's heroes, he regarded it as quite normal to forget people once they were dead. 'Morte, elle (Marie) ne m'intéressait plus. Je trouvais cela normal comme je comprenais très bien que les gens m'oubliaient après ma mort'. Another 'question sans importance' is religious belief. He does not know what sin is. The desire for an after life 'n'avait pas plus d'importance que de souhaiter d'être riche, de nager très vite ou d'avoir une bouche mieux faite. C'était du même ordre'.

From these few examples it will be seen that the writing off of dead values is extensive. The author tries to make us feel that it was dictated by a passionate concern for what the hero at least regards as living values. Chief among these is the ideal of manliness. We have seen what the prosecution made of the hero: but among the witnesses for the defence is a friend of Meursault's, Céleste, a restaurant keeper, who provides a note of choric commentary. When he was asked what he thought of the hero he told the court, as the hero says, 'que j'étais un homme', and when asked to state what he meant by that, 'il a déclaré que tout le monde savait ce que cela voulait dire'. Friendship between men is also precious. A strong passion fills him for the town he lives in, the cool of the summer evenings, etc.

> 'En sortant du palais de justice pour monter dans la voiture, j'ai reconnu un court instant l'odeur et la couleur du soir d'été. Dans l'obscurité de ma prison roulante, j'ai retrouvé un à un, comme du fond de ma fatigue, tous les bruits familiers d'une ville que j'aimais et d'une certaine heure où il m'arrivait de me sentir content. Le cri des vendeurs de journaux dans l'air déjà détendu, les derniers oiseaux dans le square, l'appel des marchands de sandwiches, la plainte des tramways dans les hauts tournants de la ville et cette rumeur du ciel avant que la nuit bascule sur le port, tout cela recomposait pour moi un itinéraire d'aveugle, que je connaissais bien avant d'entrer en prison. Oui, c'était l'heure où, il y avait bien longtemps, je me sentais content'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This lyric style appears reserved for such feelings. Summing up the hero's attitude, 'Aimez-vous donc cette terre à ce point?' the priest murmurs and asks the hero what kind of life after death he would like. 'Une vie où je pourrais me souvenir de celle-ci', he replies and after his final outburst he lies down in his cell.

> 'Des bruits de campagne montaient jusqu'à moi. Des odeurs de nuit, de terre et de sel rafraïchissaient mes tempes. La merveilleuse paix de cet été endormi entrait en moi comme une marée . . . Comme si cette grande colère m'avait purgé du mal, vidé d'espoir, devant cette nuit chargée de signes et d'étoiles, je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde. De l'éprouver si pareil à moi, si fraternel enfin, j'ai senti que j'avais été heureux, et que je l'étais encore'.

This kind of happiness is perhaps the supreme value for the hero. (M. Camus ended his essay with the phrase, 'Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux'.)

With everything so satisfactory one may wonder whether M. Camus's vision of things can properly be called tragic at all. To lose twenty years of life is a serious matter for one who measures life in quantity. The question is whether behind the series of coincidences which bring about the hero's early death there lurks the notion of inevitable doom. The inevitable seems in this novel to be the ever-present possibility of *un malheur*, so that life is really a rat trap. 'Comme si les chemins familiers tracés dans les ciels d'été pouvaient mener aussi bien aux prisons qu'aux sommeils innocents'. The choric Céleste gave as his verdict, 'Pour moi, c'est un malheur. Un malheur, tout le monde sait ce que c'est. Ca vous laisse sans défense'. I am not sure, however, whether M. Camus wished to introduce any other conception of destiny than the mere fact of inevitable death which makes everything equally important and unimportant.

There remains the question: what is the heroic attitude in a world where *tout se vaut*. For the hero it is passive acceptance. He sums this attitude up in prison.

> 'J'ai souvent pensé alors que si l'on m'avait fait vivre dans un tronc d'arbre sec, sans autre occupation que de regarder la fleur de ciel au-dessus de ma tête, je m'y serais peu à peu habitué. J'aurais attendu des passages d'oiseaux ou des rencontres de nuages comme j'attendais ici les curieuses cravates de mon avocat et comme, dans un autre monde, je patientais jusqu'au samedi pour étreindre le corps de Marie. Or, à bien réfléchir, je n'étais pas dans un arbre sec. Il y avait plus malheureux que moi. C'était d'ailleurs une idée de maman, et elle le répétait souvent, qu'on finissait par s'habituer à tout'.

The blurb says, 'The tragedy which befalls him has all the excitement and drama of the best American novels, but the deep ironical philosophy of this new and most original French writer

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is all his own, and does for the sultry atmosphere of Algiers what Hemingway has done for Spain'. The surface similarity to the work of Hemingway and Faulkner is not, I think, very significant. Camus presents the collapse of European civilization. For it will not do here to describe the values Meursault rejects as merely 'bourgeois', nor to glorify the hero as 'neo-pagan'. '*The Outsider* is not at all a morbid book, it is a violent affirmation of health and sanity', writes Mr. Connolly. On questions of values one can only be positive and dogmatic. The reader must judge whether he concurs. I do not find these values violently affirmed or presented. But latent in the style there are qualities of austerity and restraint which suggest that there is at least a *struggle* towards health and sanity. One has only to compare the work of M. Camus with that of M. Sartre to feel the presence of a positive aspiration.

On the other hand, the powerful grasp of his material is obtained by drastic limitation and simplification. To obtain his effects, M. Camus has cut off the sensibility from playing over vast areas of experience. If we accept his conventions—and the unity and sobriety of the style make this easy—we still feel cheated and want to protest, very much as readers did when *Mr. Tasker's Gods* first appeared. *The Outsider* is M. Camus's first novel. To judge it unsatisfactory is not to deny its promise. M. Camus's philosophical attitude may be both heroic and tragic, but as expressed in this novel it falls short of being either the one or the other.

For Mr. Stuart Gilbert's sake one would like to think that he had based his translation on a different text from that published by Gallimard. A random example will indicate what I mean.

> 'A cinq heures, des tramways sont arrivés dans le bruit. Ils ramenaient du stade de banlieue des grappes de spectateurs perchés sur les marchepieds et les rambardes. Les tramways suivants ont ramené les joueurs que j'ai reconnus à leurs petites valises. Ils hurlaient et chantaient à pleins poumons que leur club ne périrait pas. L'un m'a même crié: "On les a eus". Et j'ai fait: "Oui", en secouant la tête'.—*L'Etranger*, p. 34.

> 'At five there was a loud clanging of trams. They were coming from the stadium in our suburb where there had been a football match. Even the back platforms were crowded and people were standing on the steps. Then another tram brought back the teams. I knew they were the players by the little suit case each man carried. They were bawling out their team-song, "Keep the ball rolling, boys". One of them looked up at me and shouted, "We licked them!" I waved my hand and called back, "Good work!" '—*The Outsider*, p. 25.

More numerous than the minor inaccuracies are the explanatory additions which rob his version of the restraint of the original. Mr. Gilbert occasionally inserts a cliché or uses slang where the author uses the direct simple word of ordinary speech. Thus 'mon

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

avocat est arrivé' becomes 'my lawyer bustled in', 'il l'a ôté' (his hat) is rendered 'he whisked it off'. A concierge addressing the presiding magistrate says, 'Je sais bien que j'ai eu tort. Mais je n'ai pas osé refuser la cigarette que Monsieur m'a offerte'. Mr. Gilbert translates, 'Well, I know I didn't ought to have done it . . . but I did take a fag from the young gentleman when he offered it—just out of politeness'.

The most extraordinary of the omissions occurs in the final scene with the prison chaplain where the 'key' to the novel is given in the phrase 'pendant toute cette vie absurde que j'avais menée'. Mr. Gilbert suppresses the word 'absurd' in his translation and writes simply 'all my life long'. *The Outsider* should appeal to a wide public. It would be a pity not to revise the translation for the next edition.

In leaving the emphasis on the limitations of *The Outsider*, it is hard to determine whether the characteristic rigidity is merely a matter of technique, *i.e.*, whether the author could only dominate his subject by simplification, or whether it is caused by a fixation and hardening of his thought due to a radical want of sensibility. I have referred in extenuation to the feeling that there is 'more to' the author than got itself expressed in the novel. This feeling prompts one to examine the non-literary work. His most recent publication is a series of four open letters to a German friend written in the years 1943-1944, years during which M. Camus was helping to liberate his country. They are peculiarly apposite for anyone whom the novel and the plays leave with a feeling of admiration for qualities which are guessed at rather than displayed in these works. At the same time they show that M. Camus is 'all of a piece throughout' and provide confirmation of the points made in reviewing the novel.

First of all, the letters are highly *rhetorical*. M. Camus strikes and maintains throughout a sentimental attitude. A very noble attitude, I hasten to add, and one which recalls the political rhetoric of Yeats and his admired master O'Leary who said, 'There are things a man must not do to save a nation'. M. Camus's patriotism is of the same order. 'Il est des moyens qui ne s'excusent pas'. Allied to and partly a result of this rhetorical approach is a terrible simplification of the issues. The 'German friend' is forced into place in a convenient antithesis of black and white, so becoming a mere *repoussoir* for the purity of the French case. M. Camus claims that the people of France put themselves in the right by undergoing defeat, humiliation and a forced penitence. 'Il nous a fallu tout ce temps pour aller voir si nous avions le droit de tuer des hommes, s'il nous était permis d'ajouter à l'atroce misère de ce monde. Et c'est ce temps perdu et retrouvé, cette défaite acceptée et surmontée, ces scrupules payés par le sang, qui nous donnent le droit, à nous Français, de penser aujourd'hui, que nous étions entrés dans cette guerre les mains pures—de la pureté des victimes et des convaincus—et que nous allons sortir les mains pures—mais de la pureté, cette fois, d'une grande victoire remportée

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contre l'injustice et contre nous-mêmes'. We might be inclined to dismiss this with a glance at the circumstances, were it not that M. Camus values intelligence as highly as courage.

Indeed for the purpose in hand what makes these letters interesting is the boldness and clarity with which M. Camus asserts the values which have sustained him during the years of struggle. Unlike his German friend (he says) patriotism was for him only one value among others. 'Nous nous faisions de notre pays une idée qui le mettait à sa place, au milieu d'autres grandeurs, l'amitié, l'homme, le bonheur, notre désir de justice'. The most interesting point is that he brings out here a feature of his philosophy which is missing from *The Outsider*: the element of *active revolt*. The philosophy of 'the absurd' appears at first sight to be a philosophy of despair. Indeed M. Camus admits that this was his starting point and that he had this in common with his German friend.

> 'Nous avons longtemps cru ensemble que ce monde n'avait pas de raison supérieure et que nous étions frustrés. Je le crois encore d'une certaine manière. Mais j'en ai tiré d'autres conclusions que celles dont vous me parliez alors . . . Vous n'avez jamais cru au sens de ce monde et vous en avez tiré l'idéé que tout était équivalent et que le bien et le mal se définissaient selon qu'on le voulait. Vous avez supposé qu'en l'absence de toute morale humaine ou divine les seules valeurs étaient celles qui régissaient le monde animal, c'est-à-dire la violence et la ruse . . . vous acceptiez légèrement de désespérer et que je n'y ai jamais consenti. C'est que vous admettiez assez l'injustice de notre condition pour vous résoudre à y ajouter, tandis qu'il m'apparaissait au contraire que l'homme devait affirmer la justice pour lutter contre l'injustice éternelle, créer du bonheur pour protester contre l'univers du malheur . . . et moi, refusant d'admettre ce désespoir et ce monde torturé, je voulais seulement que les hommes retrouvent leur solidarité pour entrer en lutte contre leur destin révoltant . . . J'ai choisi la justice au contraire, pour rester fidèle à la terre. Je continue à croire que ce monde n'a pas de sens supérieur. Mais je sais que quelque chose en lui a du sens et c'est l'homme, parce qu'il est le seul être à exiger d'en avoir'.

He supposes his friend to ask, What is man? and replies: 'Mais là, je vous arrête, car nous le savons. Il est cette force qui finit toujours par balancer les tyrans et les dieux'.

From these ill-defined passionate statements we cannot hope to extract a philosophy. But we may without indiscretion suppose that the 'fighting quality' which has here obtained the upper hand over the 'Algerian' acquiescence in inevitable doom was in part at any rate the result of participation in the underground struggle. It may be that M. Camus will now be able to present a man with these qualities, a hero who is capable of doing as well as suffering.

H. A. MASON.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE RHYTHMICAL INTENTION IN WYATT'S POETRY[1]

IT is not always realized what an extraordinary psychological problem is suggested by the conviction of literary historians that the English post-Chaucerians lost the art of metrical writing and lapsed into a kind of prose chopped up into lines. Such a complete and sudden loss of a social skill would, if it had really occurred, have been a remarkable challenge to psychological explanation. Rather rapid changes took place in the language, it is true, and there were serious political disturbances during the fifteenth century, but something cataclysmic, linguistically and politically, would have been needed to make such a loss of skill reasonably understandable. What is more, the fifteenth century produced not only the non-metrical dissertative poems of Lydgate, Occleve, Hawes and Barclay, but also a line of lyrical and often regularly metrical verse in the form of carols, nursery rhymes and the songs of the vagantes. We are asked to suppose, then, that people had the 'ear' to enjoy such rhythms, and some could compose them, but that when the most devoted followers of Chaucer came to write they suffered an unaccountable lapse of metrical skill.

Wyatt's verse summarizes the problem. As Dr. Tillyard points out (*The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, 1929), some of his work continues the tradition of the flowing, lyrical verse of the fifteenth century carols, but much of it shows what Tillyard calls 'unconscious roughnesses' derived from the manner of Hawes and Barclay. The views of literary critics on these features of Wyatt's verse have varied from time to time, but they have all been based on the assumption that his intention was to write the flowing, metrical verse which established itself as the standard for English poetry in the Elizabethan period.

Puttenham first formulated the assumption in saying that Surrey and Wyatt 'did greately polish our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie from that it had been before, and for this cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English metre and style'. (*Arte of English Poesie*). Miss A. K. Foxwell some three hundred years later spoke of Wyatt as ' . . . the pioneer of our modern poetry. It was he who brought order out of chaos and re-established the line of five stresses . . .' (*A Study of Sir Thomas Wyatt's Poems*, 1911). But there was always the unspoken proviso

[1]The substance of a paper read to the Doughty Society, Downing College, November, 1945.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that his efforts were fumbling and that he often failed in the ordering and polishing for which he strove. So for a long time his editors, from Tottel to Quiller-Couch, cheerfully completed the polishing process and altered Wyatt's wording for the sake of metrical regularity and smoothness.

Miss Foxwell followed a different path. Her scrupulous editing was marked by irreconcilable hostility to the convenient distortions of Tottel and the rest, and the text she offers must be close to what Wyatt wrote. But as a critic she took over the familiar assumption that Wyatt aimed at metrical regularity. Instead of altering his words, in the manner of Tottel, she postulated systems of pronunciation, especially accentuation, and an amazing array of metrical rules and licences (supposed to have been derived from Pynson's Chaucer) which allowed her to believe that Wyatt was, in spite of all appearances, actually achieving a regular metre. She lists fifteen so-called rules of versification, thirteen of which (and many more if sub-divisions are included) are simply common practices in Wyatt's writing which are *not* capable of being fitted into a regular metrical scheme (*Study*, pp. 40-49). The natural conclusion is that he had no such regular scheme in mind. Foxwell's plan was to regard these practices as permitted deviations and to suppose that once you have called them this you can go on believing that he wrote metrically.

Some of the readings which result are extraordinary. In the following examples the first version indicates (with exaggerated pauses) what I take to be a rhythmical grouping of syllables in the line as Wyatt wrote it, the second is Tottel's metrical version, the third is Foxwell's proposed scansion (marked exactly as she indicates it in the *Study*) to make them, with a few 'licences', into iambic pentameters:

I	Ther was never ffile half so well filed;
(Tottel)	Was never file yet half so well yfiled;
(Foxwell)	Ther was név | er ffíle | hálf | so wéll | filéd.
II	And the reward little trust for ever;
(Tottel)	And the reward is little trust for ever;
(Foxwell)	And thé reward littlé trust fór evér.
III	I served the not to be forsaken;
(Tottel)	I served the not that I should be forsaken;
(Foxwell)	I sér | ved thé | not tó | be fór | sakén.

It has to be noticed that in spite of all the talk about Romance accentuation and the changing value of the final '-e' (where evidence can be adduced), there seems to be no philological evidence for the majority of the distorted accentuations offered by Foxwell. Their only support is the initial assumption that Wyatt wrote in regular metre. Hence completely arbitrary changes are suggested

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the pronunciation of the same word when it occurs in different poems, for no reason except that metrical regularity would require the change. For example, Foxwell says that in a line from Sonnet 2—

With his hardines taketh displeasur—

'hardines, l. 8, has the Romance accent on the second syllable'; but of Sonnet 15—

With sore repentaunce of his hardines—

she says 'hardines has modern accent here'. Again, she remarks (*Study*, p. 43) that 'ayn' (in words such as rayn and fayn) is 'often' dissyllabic; 'and plëasure *in one instance* [my italics] has three syllables'. This different accentuation in one passage and another has no shadow of support except the sheer assumption that regular metre was intended.

Moreover, many of the poems show perfectly smooth, regular rhythms when the words are pronounced in the modern way. Miss Foxwell believes (without satisfactory evidence, according to Sir Edmund Chambers) that these are later works, and therefore says (*Poems*, Vol. I, vi) 'His earlier poems, to be rightly understood, must be read with the earlier style of pronunciation, namely with the romance accents. His later poetry conforms to the modern style'. Once again the philological question of the pronunciation has been begged by the critical assumption that he must at all times have been trying to write in regular metre.

Miss Foxwell seems to stand alone in her conviction of Wyatt's metrical regularity. Saintsbury, writing before her *Study* appeared, saw no sign of it; nor does either Tillyard or Chambers writing more recently. The latter says of the translations and paraphrases, 'This division of Wyatt's work furnishes something of a puzzle. Much of it, especially in the sonnets, is stiff and difficult to scan; and even when full allowance has been made, both for Romance accentuation and for textual corruption, many lines can only be regarded as simply unmetrical . . . Attempts have been made to explain these derivative poems as prentice-work, in which Wyatt was fumbling his way to a comprehension of the pentameter, with the help of a text of Chaucer perverted by oblivion of the Chaucerian inflections. I cannot say that I find them plausible'. (*Sir Thomas Wyatt and some collected studies*, 1933). Tillyard simply notes the 'unconscious roughnesses' of some of Wyatt, in contrast to other effective and significant deviations from regular rhythm; he makes no attempt to defend them or explain them away and he regards them as a hangover from similar roughnesses in such fifteenth century poets as Hawes and Barclay.

In their view of Wyatt's metrical intention, these two recent opinions are close to that of Saintsbury who (*Cambridge History of English Literature*, III), after praising Wyatt and Surrey as those 'in whom the reformation of English verse first distinctly appears', goes on to say 'But . . . it is quite clear that even they still have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

great difficulty in adjusting rhythm to pronunciation. They "wrench accent" in the fashion which Gascoigne was to rebuke in the next (almost the same) generation . . . '. And these modern views are in a direct line of descent from Tottel. We no longer alter Wyatt's words to make the line scan, and we see (as Tillyard does for instance) the admirable effect achieved by some of his 'irregularities'. Basically, however, we assume that he did his best to write metrically but marred his work with rather frequent bungling.

It is this idea which, considered seriously, is so startling. Is it really possible to believe that a writer who shows such exquisite management of rhythm in some of his verse could have been reduced by the mere difficulty of manipulating language to such elementary failures of metrical writing as the critics think they see in other parts of his work? The very notion that he progressed slowly, with laborious practice, towards metre is unplausible. Emphatic metrical schemes are among the earliest forms of composition, and both children and 'primitive' peoples master them readily. It is true that exceptional polish of simple metres may represent one form of literary sophistication, as in Dryden and Pope, but advancing skill and command of language may equally lead to increasing irregularity, as of course in Shakespeare. Whatever chronology may ultimately be accepted for Wyatt's poems it will not in itself prove that he wrote the irregular lines because metre was too difficult to compass, because he had 'great difficulty in adjusting rhythm to pronunciation'.

To my mind it is impossible to believe that Wyatt could not quite easily have made his irregular lines regular had he wished. Fifteen years after his death Tottel's *Miscellany* came out, with very trivial and obvious changes which put the metre straight. Can we believe that changes which came so easily to Tottel or his hack had been impossibly difficult to a man like Wyatt fifteen or twenty years earlier, or that Wyatt had failed to detect the missing or redundant syllable or the reversed accent in the lines that Tottel 'corrected'? In the poem from prison, 'Sighes ar my foode' the first two lines run

> Sighes ar my foode: drinke are my teares
> Clynkinge of fetters suche musycke wolde crave:

Tottel changes the second to

> Clynkinge of fetters would such Musick crave.

Three lines further on Wyatt writes

> Rayne, wynde or wether I judge by myne eares

and Tottel changes this to

> Rayne, wynde or wether judge I by myne eares.

Would alterations of this kind have been beyond Wyatt's skill, or the necessity for them beyond his perception?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Consider a most revealing change in the poem 'Alas madame for stelyng of a kysse'. Wyatt's fifth and sixth lines run

> Then revenge you: and the next way is this:
> An othr kysse shall have my lyffe endid.

Tottle alters the fifth line to

> Revenge you then, the rediest way is this.

But the revealing fact is that Wyatt's version was itself a revision—his own revision—of what he first wrote, and what he first wrote was just as regular as Tottel; it ran

> Revenge you then and sure ye shall not mysse
> To have my life with an othr ended.

In other words, Wyatt deliberately altered it from metrical regularity to what it now is.

It seems very probable that when Wyatt didn't write in regular metre it was because he didn't want to. If we take this view we are left with the question, What did he aim at in the so-called 'awkward' rhythms? How are we to read the lines? Where we have no fixed metrical scheme to guide us, it seems that the simplest alternative is to follow speech rhythms, and to group the words into rhythm units suggested partly by the sense and partly by convenience in forming the sounds of the words. The speech rhythm we adopt must be affected by anything we really know about pronunciation in Wyatt's time, but it ought not to be based on 'rules of pronunciation' derived from the assumption that he wrote in metre.

Before going further I have to say what I mean by a rhythm unit. The experience of rhythm is not the passive recording of some pattern of time intervals but an active process, the process of rhythmization. It is one kind of mental unifying activity: a number of impressions that would otherwise be merely a sequence can, if rhythmized, be perceived as an organized whole. It is perceived as a unit, distinguished from its background; and it has a structure or pattern, depending on the fact that the component impressions are differentiated within the rhythm unit, some standing out and others being subordinate. A simple example of rhythmization is the hearing of the regular and equal sounds of a clock as 'tick-tock'. This is subjective rhythmization. More usually the differentiation of one sound from another is brought about by objective differences—of loudness, duration, length of interval and so on. But what creates the differences is a subsidiary point: all that matters is that the component impressions of the rhythm unit are in fact perceived as different from one another, so that a pattern is apparent in the unit.

This unification of sensory impressions is independent of their having any meaning—of their 'standing for' or referring to anything outside themselves; a meaningless sequence of syllables can

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be rhythmized. Further, the unification brought about by rhythmization is, for conscious experience, immediate, and though conscious activities (such as counting) may help to bring it about, yet when it does occur it will appear as an 'immediate fact of sensory apprehension' (R. MacDougall, *Psychological Monographs*, IV, 17). It is well known that once rhythmization in a certain pattern has been established it tends to recur in that pattern very readily, but this fact is not essential in the definition of rhythm, and it is important not to confuse rhythmization with the *repetition* of a rhythm unit (as for example in metre).

The rhythm units in ordinary speech and prose are very varied in structure, not regularly repeated, not emphasized strongly, and not much attended to. When our attention is caught by a speech rhythm it is generally in the form of a short phrase in which a sense unit and a rhythm unit coincide, and often one in which a well marked attitude or emotion is expressed; for instance, 'What a day!', 'Believe it or not . . . ', 'Did you really?', 'You mark my words . . . ' Slogans have the same characteristic. Advertisers have also noticed that if the flow of prose is broken and rhythm units given prominence by typographical devices, the effect is to claim more attention for the rhythms and the way they emphasize the sense. A series of advertisements for National Savings in 1945 put their message in such forms as

> Never before
> in a few years
> have the people of Britain
> achieved so much.
> Never before
> etc.

Advertising of this kind was derived from the serious use made of the same device by the writers of free verse, who employed additional means of concentrating sense and feeling, such as the omission of inessential words, the repetition of grammatical constructions and so on:

> The young today are born prisoners,
> poor things, and they know it.
> Born in a universal workhouse,
> and they feel it.
> Inheriting a sort of confinement,
> work, and prisoners' routine
> and prisoners' flat, ineffectual pastime.
>
> (D. H. Lawrence, *Pansies*).

In one way and another, through serious and trivial experiments, we are now familiar with the effects of heightened significance that may be gained by emphasizing the rhythmical units which underlie ordinary speech and prose.

Normally these units are kept flowing into one another and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

losing their outlines.[1] The flow occurs, I think, through the fact that certain words can readily form a rhythmical unit with either the preceding or the following words, and they thus partly bridge the pause between two smaller units. Consider a piece of Henry James' prose, printed with an exaggerated indication of the just perceptible pauses that seem to me to give the most natural grouping of words for ordinary reading:

> 'The river—had always—for Hyacinth—a deep attraction. —The ambiguous appeal he had felt—as a child—in all the aspects of London—came back to him—from the dark detail of its banks—and the sordid—agitation of its bosom'. (*The Princess Casamassima*).

I have indicated what seems to me a natural grouping, but other groupings are almost equally possible and to other readers may seem preferable.

For example, instead of 'The ambiguous appeal he had felt—as a child', we could read 'The ambiguous appeal—he had felt as a child'. There are here two rhythmical nuclei—one 'The ambiguous appeal', the other 'as a child'—and the phrase 'he had felt' will attach itself with almost equal ease to either. Again, in the quotation as I have given it, some of the larger groupings are themselves made up of smaller rhythmical nuclei connected by these floating words. Thus the phrase 'from the dark detail of its banks' has the two nuclei 'from the dark' and 'of its banks', and the word 'detail' can attach itself to either nucleus: 'from the dark detail—of its banks' or 'from the dark—detail of its banks'. In this way a kind of competition between one rhythmical unit and another deprives both of any close attention or emphasis and creates the fairly steady flow of prose, with pauses marking only the main divisions of the sense.

In completely metrical verse there is equally a continuous flowing from one rhythmical unit to the next; but because the successive units have the same internal structure—the same number of syllables and pattern of accents—we still have the outline of the rhythmical unit brought emphatically to our attention. Against this suggested background of repeated identical units the writer then introduces deviations for special effects. But his groundwork is the continuous flow throughout the line, with only a slight pause at the caesura.

Now a characteristic of free verse, and of many of Wyatt's irregular rhythms, is that the rhythmical units will not flow continuously from one to another. It is pausing verse instead of

---

[1] I am grateful to Professor F. C. Bartlett for pointing out that in an earlier paper (*British Journal of Psychology*, 1932) the account I gave of rhythm units offered no explanation of the continuous flow from one unit to another. The present notes are a belated beginning at finding some explanation.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flowing verse. In free verse the pauses are largely secured by the typographical device of the line ending. In the verse of *Piers Plowman*, the pause-mark is used, besides the line ending. But these scribal and typographic devices are not always necessary, because sometimes the structure of the successive rhythmical units is itself enough to prevent any flowing of one into the other. A few lines from *Piers Plowman* will illustrate the point:

> For hunger hiderward · hasteth hym faste,
> He shal awake with water · wastoures to chaste.

In the first lines the pause-mark only emphasizes what might be the caesura in a flowing, metrical line. But the second line is divided by a complete pause, like a rest in music. In the next two lines of the poem also the pause-mark and the line ending divide rhythmical units that are not meant to flow together:

> Ar fyve yere be fulfilled · suche famyn shal aryse,
> Thorwgh flodes and thourgh foule wederes · frutes shal faille.
>
> (Passus VI, 323-326).

If we try to make them flow continuously we are tripped up with surplus syllables or unexpected accents. Each separate section of the lines forms a satisfying rhythmical unit by itself, but because each is of different rhythmical structure there is no smooth flow either from one section of the line to the other or from one line to the next. It is verse that depends on a pause between successive rhythmical units.

This pausing verse has much in common with plainsong. The music complicates the question by sometimes giving an unnatural or exaggerated accentuation, but the main effect is similar: the words are divided up into rhythmical units of diverse structure which therefore have to be clearly separated from one another by a pause: 'As it was in the beginning—is now—and ever shall be'. The 'parallelism' adopted in the translation of the Psalms further reinforces the tradition of balanced but distinct units as a satisfactory mode of treating language. And, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on plainsong points out, the absence of a regularly repeated rhythm allies plainsong 'with such things as sea-chanties, counting-out rhymes, and the like'.

Within this strong English tradition much of Wyatt's verse takes its place, with two (or possibly more) diverse rhythmical units included in one line. In much of his verse, of course, units of similar structure are brought together and then the line flows, becoming regular and metrical. But it seems evident that Wyatt had no conception that the pausing rhythm was in any way incorrect or unsatisfactory. It would not have been beyond his skill to turn it into flowing rhythm had he wished.

The first poem in Miss Foxwell's edition illustrates clearly the general plan of two balancing rhythmical units in a line, with a pause dividing them. It is particularly interesting on account

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the heavy punctuation in the manuscript (reproduced in facsimile) which emphasizes the pauses between the rhythmical units:

> Behold, love, thy power how she despiseth:
> my great payne how little she regardeth:
> the holy oth, whereof she taketh no cure:
> broken she hath: and yet, she bideth sure,
> right at her ease: and litle she dredeth.
> Wepened thou art: and she unarmed sitteth:
> To the disdaynfull, her liff she ledeth:
> To me spitefull, withoute cause, or mesur.
> Behold, love:
>
> I ame in hold: if pitie the meveth:
> Goo, bend thy bowe: that stony hertes breketh:
> And, with some stroke, revenge the displeasur
> of the, and him: that sorrowe doeth endur:
> And, as his lorde, the lowly, entreateth.
> Behold, love.

Another poem (later, according to Miss Foxwell) is worth quoting because although it has little intrinsic interest it shows how readily Wyatt would introduce pausing lines in a poem where most of the lines were flowing.

> Venemus thornes that ar so sharp and kene,
> Sometyme ber flowers fayre and fresh of hue:
> Poyson offtyme is put in medecene,
> And causith helth in man for to renue:
> Ffire that purgith allthing that is unclene,
> May hele and hurt: and if thes bene true,
> I trust sometyme my harme may be my helth:
> Syns evry wo is joynid with some welth.

In most of these lines the pause between the rhythmical units is reduced to the caesura of flowing verse, but in lines 5 and 6 it recovers its full value because the units it divides are too dissimilar to flow together. Tottel's emendations are extended even to the earlier lines so as to reduce still further the suggestion of two separate units and to bring each line into an even more continuous flow, giving minimal value to the caesura:

line 2 beur flowers we se full fresh and faire of hue

line 3 poison is also put in medecene

line 4 and unto man his helth doth oft renue

line 5 The fier that all thinges else consumeth clene

line 6 May hele and hurt: then if that this be true

I should say that in a case like this the difference between Wyatt and Tottel is a complete difference in rhythmical principle. It is not that Tottel established the metrical regularity after which Wyatt was clumsily groping; it is not that he crudely ironed out subtle variations that Wyatt had introduced into a metrical scheme;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and it is not that he misunderstood a system of pronunciation which had once made the poems scan correctly. The difference is that Tottel's generation had fully accepted the metrical principle of the flowing line and had turned its back completely on the pausing, balanced line.

Inevitably the versifiers of the new generation went too far towards mechanical regularity, and a passage in *Henry IV, Part I*—which has no doubt often been cited by students of prosody—gives with effective illustration the contrast between the insipid regularity of much early Elizabethan verse and on the other hand the vigour of writing which allows its rhythmical units some of the diversity of structure that marks both speech and pausing verse. First comes Glendower's speech, a parody of Tottel (including the syllabic '-ed' in line 3), and then Hotspur's explicit criticism of it, in verse that finely exemplifies an alternative:

Glendower: I can speak English, lord, as well as you;
For I was trained up at the English court;
Where being but young, I framed to the harp
Many an English ditty, lovely well,
And gave the tongue a helpful ornament,—
A virtue that was never seen in you.

Hotspur: Marry, and I'm glad of it with all my heart:
I had rather be a kitten, and cry mew,
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers;
I had rather hear a brazen canstick turn'd,
Or a dry wheel grate on the axle-tree;
And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,
Nothing so much as mincing poetry:—
Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag.

(Act III, Sc. 1).

Wyatt comes at the turning point of the change in rhythmical intention, and his writing includes both flowing and pausing lines. It may be that he came to prefer the flowing line; only a reliable chronology of his work could decide. Whatever the answer, there seems to me little doubt that in many of his poems, early or late (and probably both), he positively chose the pausing line composed of dissimilar rhythmical units. Many difficulties no doubt remain, even if we accept this view. (The Sonnets, for one thing, need further explanation. Whether or not Wyatt fully understood the principles of the Italian verse on which he modelled them, it looks as if he was experimenting in most of them with lines of a fixed number of syllables, with little regard for accent—as if the old pausing verse was being complicated and spoilt by mechanical fixity in the number of syllables). However, it seems to be a step forward if we have something to put in place of the unplausible—I think untenable—theory of an extraordinary loss of skill that put regular metres beyond the reach of English writers from Chaucer's death to Tottel's *Miscellany*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In fact, of course, even the orthodox scholars have had their doubts about this theory, even when they have helped to popularize it. Saintsbury, who seems to have done most to establish the view of fifteenth-century poets as writers of a barbarous pseudo-verse, himself admits that the supposed facts present a puzzle which has not been entirely explained. After referring to the futility of trying 'to get the verses of Lydgate, Occleve and the rest into any kind of rhythmical system, satisfactory at once to calculation and audition' (!), he goes on, 'And yet we know that almost all these writers had Chaucer constantly before them and regarded him with the highest admiration; and we know further, that his followers in Scotland managed to imitate him with very considerable precision. No real or full explanation of this singular decadence has ever yet been given; probably none is possible'. (*Cambridge History of English Literature*, III).

Most people would agree, given Saintsbury's premises. But the insoluble problem exists only if we beg the real question and assume with Saintsbury that it is simply a 'singular decadence' that we have to explain. The alternative possibility is that these poets were trying to do something different from Chaucer (or from Skeat's reading of Chaucer). Saintsbury almost says that this was so. He offers two partial explanations of the 'singular decadence'. One is the familiar story of the syllabic final '-e' and its obsolescence. The other, much more to the point, is that during this period there was a widespread revival of alliterative-accentual verse; verse which depended not on a flowing line but on rhythmical units, divided if necessary by a pause. If we are rigidly committed, as Saintsbury was, to a system of metrical scansion, with the iambic pentameter as the chief criterion of rhythmical excellence, we are bound to regard fifteenth century verse as a decadence and as evidence of lost skill. But to the writers concerned it derived from a long tradition of native verse, reinforced by the tradition of liturgical chanting.

We may think that what they did was a failure. The varied uses of the dissertative poems, as vehicles for sermons, political discussions, scientific and medical dissertations, fiction and narrative, encouraged a loss of interest in the rhythmical aspect of writing and allowed it to become more and more prosy. At the same time, the loss of rhythmical quality in fifteenth century writers as a whole is not so extreme as one would gather from critics like Saintsbury.

Some examples of what he calls doggerel are far from being as futile, rhythmically, as he finds them, especially since they occur in plays, where the variety of speech rhythm has special claims. He quotes from Heywood's *Husband, Wife and Priest*:

> But by my soul I never go to Sir John
> But I find him like a holy man,
> For either he is saying his devotion,
> Or else he is going in procession,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where the effect seems to be of emphatic repudiation and a hasty mustering of evidence (I have again exaggerated the slight reading pauses). But Saintsbury says the first two lines are pseudo-octosyllabics, and then complains that 'the very next lines slide into pseudo-heroics'. Continuing with this obsessional prosody he gives from Bale's *Kyng Johan* an example of what he calls pseudo-alexandrines:

> Monkes, chanons and nones in divers colours and shape,
> Both whyte, blacke, and pyed, God send their increase yll happe.

The effectiveness of this vigorous writing depends on our accepting the principle of a pause or rest between rhythmical units. This is what Saintsbury particularly disliked, as giving what he called the 'broken-backed line'. He quotes an example from Hawes:

> The minde of men chaungeth as the mone,

which again, read naturally, has a satisfying rhythmical quality.

In the period that separates us from the time when Saintsbury was writing and forming his taste there have been the free verse movement and all its derivatives, the appearance of Hopkins' poems, a new appreciation of Donne, and Graves' insistence on the interest of Skelton's verse (which Saintsbury instanced as fifteenth century doggerel). By all these means, and no doubt others, we have been led away from the assumption that smoothly flowing metrical verse is the standard for all poetry. But in speaking of variations and licence and 'free' verse we have still been inclined to adopt a negative view of non-metrical verse—we have regarded it as a 'departure from' some established norm.

What I have been suggesting is that we have in the tradition of our language a positively different mode of rhythmical organization. Some of the most effective of the so-called 'deviations' from metrical norms might be better understood in terms of the other rhythmical principle. A possible instance comes from Henry King's 'Exequy'. The metrical framework consists in four iambic feet to a line:

> Accept thou Shrine of my dead Saint,
> Instead of Dirges this complaint.

But what do we gain by describing the following lines in terms of licences within or deviations from the metrical scheme?—

> But heark! My pulse like a soft Drum
> Beats my approach, tells *Thee* I come; . . .

Even from the prosodic point of view it seems that the lines could best be described in terms of rhythmical units rather than metrical feet.

At any rate I suggest that the non-metrical forms of verse, and the related modes of handling language, deserve a closer—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and still more a friendlier—study than they have received from orthodox prosody. In any such study Wyatt's work should have an important place. He was at home in both kinds of rhythmical organization and came at a turning point when the flowing metrical style gained a supreme place in English verse, but not such exclusive control of it as some prosodists have thought.

D. W. HARDING.

GEORGE ELIOT (IV)

'DANIEL DERONDA' AND 'THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY'

IN no other of her works is the association of the strength with the weakness so remarkable or so unfortunate as in *Daniel Deronda*. It is so peculiarly unfortunate, not because the weakness spoils the strength—the two stand apart, on a large scale, in fairly neatly separable masses; but because the mass of fervid and wordy unreality seems to have absorbed most of the attention the book has ever had, and to be all that is remembered of it. That this should be so shows, I think, how little George Eliot's acceptance has rested upon a critical recognition of her real strength and distinction, and how unfair to her, in effect, is the conventional overvaluing of her early work. For if the nature of her real strength and distinction had been appreciated for what it is, so magnificent an achievement as the good half of *Daniel Deronda* could not have failed to compel an admiration that would have established it, not the less for the astonishing badness of the bad half, among the great things in fiction.

It will be best to get the bad half out of the way first. This can be quickly done, since the weakness doesn't require any sustained attention, being of a kind that has already been thoroughly discussed. It is represented by Deronda himself, and by what may be called in general the Zionist inspiration[1] . . . In these inspirations her intelligence and real moral insight are not engaged. But she is otherwise wholly engaged—how wholly and how significantly being brought further home to us when we note that Deronda's racial mission finds itself identified with his love for Mirah, so that he is eventually justified in the 'sweet irresistible hopefulness that the best of human possibilities might befall him—the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a larger duty . . . '.

[1]At this point a part of the essay as intended for publication in book form has been omitted.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All in the book that issues from this inspiration is unreal and impotently wordy in the way discussed earlier in connection with Dorothea—though *Middlemarch* can show nothing to match the wastes of biblicality and fervid idealism ('Revelations') devoted to Mordecai, or the copious and drearily comic impossibility of the working-men's club (Chapter CXLII), or the utterly routing Shakespearean sprightliness of Hans Meyrick's letter in Chapter LII. The Meyricks who, while not being direct products of the prophetic afflatus, are subordinate ministers to it, are among those elements in George Eliot that seem to come from Dickens rather than from life, and so is the pawnbroker's family: the humour and tenderness are painfully trying, with that quality they have, that obviousness of intention, which relates them so intimately to the presiding solemnity they subserve.

No more need be said about the weak and bad side of *Daniel Deronda*. By way of laying due stress upon the astonishingly contrasting strength and fineness of the large remainder, the way in which George Eliot transcends in it not only her weakness, but what are commonly thought to be her limitations, I will make an assertion of fact and a critical comparison: Henry James wouldn't have written *The Portrait of a Lady* if he hadn't read *Gwendolen Harleth* (as I shall call the good part of *Daniel Deronda*), and, of the pair of closely comparable works, George Eliot's has not only the distinction of having come first; it is decidedly the greater. The fact, once asserted, can hardly be questioned. Henry James wrote his 'Conversation' on *Daniel Deronda* in 1876, and he began *The Portrait of a Lady* 'in the spring of 1879'. No one who considers both the intense appreciative interest he shows in *Gwendolen Harleth* and the extraordinary resemblance of his own theme to George Eliot's (so that *The Portrait of a Lady* might fairly be called a variation) is likely to suggest that this resemblance is accidental and non-significant.

Isabel Archer is Gwendolen and Osmond is Grandcourt—the parallel, in scheme, at any rate, is very close and very obvious. As for the individual characters, that Osmond is Grandcourt is a proposition less likely to evoke protest than the other. And there are certainly more important differences between Isabel and Gwendolen than between Osmond and Grandcourt—a concession that, since the woman is the protagonist and the centre of interest, may seem to be a very favourably significant one in respect of James's originality. The differences, however, as I see them are fairly suggested by saying that Isabel Archer is Gwendolen Harleth seen by a man. And it has to be added that, in presenting such a type, George Eliot has a woman's advantage.

To say that, in the comparison, James's presentment is seen to be sentimental won't, perhaps, quite do; but it is, I think, seen to be partial in both senses of the word—controlled, that is, by a vision that is both incomplete and indulgent; so that we have to grant George Eliot's presentment an advantage in reality. Here it may be protested that James is *not* presenting Gwendolen Harleth,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but another girl, and that he is perfectly within his rights in choosing a type that is more wholly sympathetic. That, no doubt, is what James intended to do in so far as he had Gwendolen Harleth in mind. But that he had her in mind at all consciously, so that he thought of himself as attempting a variation on George Eliot's theme, seems to me very unlikely. The inspiration, or challenge, he was conscious of was some girl encountered in actual life:

> 'a perfect picture of youthfulness—its eagerness, its presumption, its preoccupation with itself, its vanity and silliness, its sense of its own absoluteness. But she is extremely intelligent and clever, and therefore tragedy *can* have a hold on her'.

This, as a matter of fact, is James's description of Gwendolen (given through Theodora, the most sympathetic of the three *personae* of the 'Conversation', who is here—as the style itself shows—endorsed by the judicially central Constantius): there seems no need to insist further that there is point in saying that Isabel Archer is Gwendolen Harleth seen by a man—or that Gwendolen is Isabel seen by a woman. For clearly, in the girl so described there must have been (even if we thing of her as Isabel Archer—in whom James doesn't *see* vanity and silliness) expressions of her 'preoccupation with self' and her 'sense of her own absoluteness' justifying observations and responses more critical and unsympathetic than any offered by James. It isn't that George Eliot shows any animus towards Gwendolen; simply, as a very intelligent woman she is able, unlimited by masculine partiality of vision, and only the more perceptive because a woman, to achieve a much *completer* presentment of her subject than James of his. This strength which manifests itself in sum as completeness affects us locally as a greater specificity, an advantage which, when considered, turns out to be also an advantage over James in consistency. And, as a matter of fact, a notable specificity marks the strength of her mature art in general.

This strength appears in her rendering of country-house and 'county' society compared with James's. Here we have something that is commonly supposed to lie outside her scope. Her earlier life having been what it was, and her life as a practising novelist having been spent with G. H. Lewes, 'cut off from the world' ('the loss for a novelist was serious', says Mrs. Woolf), what can she have known of the 'best society, where no one makes an invidious display of anything in particular, and the advantages of the world are taken with that high-bred depreciation which follows from being accustomed to them' (her own words)? The answer is that, however she came by her knowledge, she can, on the showing of *Daniel Deronda*, present that world with such fulness and reality as to suggest that she knows it as completely and inwardly as she knows *Middlemarch*. James himself was much impressed by this aspect of her strength. Of the early part of George Eliot's book he says (through Constantius): 'I delighted in its deep, rich English tone, in which so many notes seemed melted together'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The stress should fall on the 'many notes' rather than on the 'melted', for what James is responding to is the specificity and completeness of the rendering, whereas 'melted' suggests an assimilating mellowness, charming and conciliating the perceptions; a suffusing richness, bland and emollient. George Eliot's richness is not of that kind: she has too full and strong a sense of the reality, she sees too clearly and understandingly, sees with a judging vision that relates everything to her profoundest moral experience: her full living sense of value is engaged, and sensitively responsive. It isn't that she doesn't appreciate the qualities that so appeal to Henry James: she renders them at least as well as he—renders them better, in the sense that she 'places' them (a point very intimately related to the other, that her range of 'notes' is much wider than his). It is true that, as Virginia Woolf says, 'She is no satirist'. But the reason given, 'The movement of her mind was too slow and cumbersome to lend itself to comedy', shows that Mrs. Woolf hadn't read *Daniel Deronda*—and can't have read other things at all perceptively. If George Eliot is no satirist it is not because she hasn't the quickness, the delicacy of touch and the precision. And it certainly is not that she hasn't the perceptions and responses that go to make satire. Consider, for instance, the interview between Gwendolen and her uncle, the Reverend Mr. Gascoigne ('man of the world turned clergyman'), in Chapter XIII:

> 'This match with Grandcourt presented itself to him as a sort of public affair; perhaps there were ways in which it might even strengthen the Establishment. To the Rector, whose father (nobody would have suspected it, and nobody was told) had risen to be a provincial corn-dealer, aristocratic heirship resembled regal heirship in excepting its possessor from the ordinary standard of moral judgments, Grandcourt, the almost certain baronet, the probable peer, was to be ranged with public personages, and was a match to be accepted on broad general grounds national and ecclesiastical . . . But if Grandcourt had really made any deeper or more unfortunate experiments in folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. This was the view of practical wisdom; with reference to higher views, repentance had a supreme moral and religious value. There was every reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt'.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> '"Is he disagreeable to you personally?"
>
> "No".
>
> "Have you heard anything of him which has affected you disagreeably?" The Rector thought it impossible that Gwendolen could have heard the gossip he had heard, but in any case he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must endeavour to put all things in the right light for her.

"I have heard nothing about him except that he is a great match" said Gwendolen, with some sauciness; "and that affects me very agreeably".

"Then, my dear Gwendolen, I have nothing further to say than this: you hold your fortune in your own hands—a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances—a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes your acceptance of it a duty. If Providence offers you power and position—especially when unclogged by any conditions that are repugnant to you—your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter. A man does not like to have his attachment trifled with: he may not be at once repelled—these things are matters of individual disposition. But the trifling may be carried too far. And I must point out to you that in case Mr. Grandcourt were repelled without your having refused him—without your having intended ultimately to refuse him, your situation would be a humiliating and painful one. I, for my part, should regard you with severe disapprobation, as the victim of nothing else than your own coquetry and folly".

Gwendolen became pallid as she listened to this admonitory speech. The ideas it raised had the force of sensations. Her resistant courage would not help here here, because her uncle was not urging her against her own resolve; he was pressing upon her the motives of dread which she already felt; he was making her more conscious of the risks that lay within herself. She was silent, and the Rector observed that he had produced some strong effect.

"I mean this in kindness, my dear". His tone had softened.

"I am aware of that, uncle", said Gwendolen, rising and shaking her head back, as if to rouse herself out of painful passivity. "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time—before it is too late. And I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr. Grandcourt. I mean to accept him, if possible". She felt as if she were reinforcing herself by speaking with this decisiveness to her uncle.

But the Rector was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished that in her mind his advice should be taken in an infusion of sentiments proper to a girl, and such as are presupposed in the advice of a clergyman, although he may not consider them always appropriate to be put forward. He wished his niece parks, carriages, a title—everything that would make this world a pleasant abode; but he wished her not to be cynical—to be, on the contrary, religiously dutiful, and have warm domestic affections.

"My dear Gwendolen", he said, rising also, and speaking with benignant gravity. "I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if your marriage with Mr. Grandcourt should be happily decided upon, you will have probably an increasing power, both of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. These considerations are something higher than romance. You are fitted by natural gifts for a position which, considering your birth and early prospects, could hardly be looked forward to as in the ordinary course of things; and I trust that you will grace it not only by those personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life".
>
> "I hope Mamma will be the happier", said Gwendolen, in a more cheerful way, lifting her hands backward to her neck, and moving towards the door. She wanted to waive those higher considerations'.

This is Samuel Butler's matter, and taken by itself, not, in effect, altogether remote from Samuel Butler's mode. The presentment of the Rector here is directly satirical—at any rate, it might very well have come from a satirical novel. But even within the passage quoted there are signs (notably in the short narrative passage describing Gwendolen's state of mind) adverting us that the author isn't a satirist. And we know from his appearances elsewhere that her total attitude towards Mr. Gascoigne is very far from being satirical; she shows him as an impressive and on the whole admirable figure: 'cheerful, successful worldliness', she tells us, 'has a false air of being more selfish than the acrid, unsuccessful kind, whose secret history is summed up in the terrible words "Sold, but not paid for" '. And Mr. Gascoigne not only has strong family feeling and a generous sense of duty, but shows himself in adversity not only admirably practical, but admirably unselfish. George Eliot sees too much and has too strong a sense of the real (as well as too much self-knowledge and too adequate and constant a sense of her own humanity) to be a satirist.

The kind of complexity and completeness, the fulness of vision and response, represented by her Mr. Gascoigne characterizes her rendering in general of the world to which he belongs. Henry James's presentment of what is essentially the same world is seen, in the comparison, to have entailed much excluding and simplifying. His is a subtle art, and he has his irony; but the irony doesn't mean inclusiveness—an adequacy to the complexities of the real in its concrete fulness; it doesn't mark a complex valuing process that has for upshot a total attitude in which all the elements of a full response are brought together. His art (in presenting this world in *The Portrait of a Lady*, I mean) seems to leave out all such perceptions as evoke the tones and facial expressions with which we register the astringent and unpalatable. The irony is part of the subtlety of the art by which, while being so warmly concrete in effect, he can, without challenge, be so limited and selective, and, what is an essential condition of his selectiveness, so lacking in specificity compared with George Eliot. His world of 'best society' and country house is, for all its life and charm, immeasur-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ably less real (the word has a plain enough force here, and will bear pondering) than George Eliot's. He idealizes, and his idealizing is a matter of not seeing, and not knowing (or not taking into account), a great deal of the reality. And it seems to me that we have essentially this kind of idealizing in his Isabel Archer; she stands to Gwendolen Harleth as James's 'best society' does to George Eliot's.

In saying this, of course, I am insisting on the point of comparing Gwendolen with Isabel. The point is to bring out the force of James's own tribute (paid through Constantius) to the characteristic strength of George Eliot's art as exhibited in her protagonist:

> 'And see how the girl is known, inside out, how thoroughly she is felt and understood. It is the most *intelligent* thing in all George Eliot's writing; and that is saying much. It is so deep, so true, so complete, it holds such a wealth of psychological detail, it is more than masterly'.

It would hardly be said of Isabel Archer that the presentment of her is complete; it is characteristic of James's art to have made her an effective enough presence for his purpose without anything approaching a 'wealth of psychological detail'. Her peculiar kind of impressiveness, in fact, is conditioned by her *not* being known inside out, and—we have to confess it—could *not* have been achieved by George Eliot: she knows too much about that kind of girl. For it is fair to say that if James had met Gwendolen Harleth (and, it must be added, if she had been an American) he would have seen Isabel Archer; he immensely admired George Eliot's inwardness and completeness of rendering, but when he met the girl in actual life and was prompted to the conception of *The Portrait of a Lady*, he saw her with the eyes of an American gentleman.

It is of course possible to imagine a beautiful, clever and vital girl, with 'that sense of superior claims which made a large part of her consciousness' (George Eliot's phrase for Gwendolen, but it applies equally to Isabel), whose egoism yet shouldn't be as much open to the criticism of an intelligent woman as Gwendolen's. But it is hard to believe that, in life, she could be as free from qualities inviting a critical response as the Isabel Archer seen by James. Asking of Gwendolen, why, though a mere girl, she should be everywhere a centre of deferential attention, George Eliot says (Chap. IV): 'The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface:—in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones, so that if she came into the room on a rainy day when everybody else was flaccid and the use of things in general was not apparent to them, there seemed to be a sudden reason for keeping up the forms of life'. James might very well have been glad to have found these phrases for his heroine. But George Eliot isn't satisfied with the answer: she not only goes on, as James would hardly have done, to talk about

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the girl's 'inborn energy of egoistic desire', she is very specific and concrete in exhibiting the play of that energy—the ways in which it imposes her claims on the people around her. And it is not enough to reply that James doesn't need to be specific to this effect—even granting, as we may, that the two authors are dealing with different girls: it is so plain that George Eliot knows more about hers than he about his, and that this accounts for an important part of the ostensible difference.

And in so far as the ostensible difference does, as we have to grant it does, go back to an actual difference in the object of the novelist's interest, then we must recognize, I think, that George Eliot's choice—one determined by the nature of her interests and the quality of her interestedness—of a Gwendolen rather than an Isabel is that of someone who knows and sees more and has a completer grasp of the real; and that it is one that enables the novelist to explore more thoroughly and profoundly the distinctive field of human nature to be representative of which is the essential interest offered by both girls—though the one offers a fuller and richer development than the other. Difference of actual type chosen for presentment, difference of specificity and depth in presenting—it isn't possible, as a matter of fact, to distinguish with any decision and say which mainly we have to do with. Isabel, a beautiful and impressive American girl, is in the habit of receiving deferential masculine attention; she would certainly be very extraordinary if she were not in the habit of expecting something in the nature of homage. Here is George Eliot on Gwendolen (Chap. XL):

> 'In the ladies' dining-room it was evident that Gwendolen was not a general favourite with her own sex; there were no beginnings of intimacy between her and the other girls, and in conversation they rather noted what she said than spoke to her in free exchange. Perhaps it was that she was not much interested in them, and when left alone in their company had a sense of empty benches. Mrs. Vulcany once remarked that Miss Harleth was too fond of the gentlemen; but we know that she was not in the least fond of them—she was only fond of their homage—and women did not give her homage'.

James *tells* us nothing like this about Isabel; in fact he *shows* us her receiving homage from women as well. But we can't help remembering that James himself is a gentleman—and remembering also as relevant (without, of course, imputing silliness to James) George Eliot's description of Herr Klesmer being introduced, by Mrs. Arrowpoint, to Gwendolen (Chap. V): 'his alarming cleverness was made less formidable just then by a certain softening air of silliness which will sometimes befall even Genius in the desire of being agreeable to Beauty'.

George Eliot's genius appears in the specificity with which she exhibits the accompaniments in Gwendolen of the kind of conscious advantage she resembles Isabel in enjoying. There is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the conversation with Mrs. Arrowpoint that comes just before Herr Klesmer has the opportunity to produce that 'softening air of silliness', a conversation that illustrates one of the disabilities of egoism: 'self-confidence is apt to address itself to an imaginary dulness in others; as people who are well off speak in a cajoling tone to the poor, and those who are in the prime of life raise their voice and speak artificially to seniors, hastily conceiving them to be deaf and rather imbecile'. We have hardly here a writer the movement of whose mind is 'too slow and cumbersome for comedy' and whose 'hold upon dialogue is slack'. When she is at her best, as she is on so large a scale in *Gwendolen Harleth*, there is no writer of whom these criticisms are less true. Nowhere is her genius more apparent than in the sensitive precision of her 'hold on dialogue'; a hold which, with the variety of living tension she can create with it, is illustrated below in the scene between Gwendolen and her mother that follows on the arrival of Grandcourt's self-committing note, and in the decisive tête-à-tête with Grandcourt. It is essentially in her speech that Gwendolen is made a concrete presence—Gwendolen, whose 'ideal it was to be daring in speech and reckless in braving danger, both moral and physical'; of whom it is hard to say whether she is more fitly described as tending to act herself or her ideal of herself; 'whose lively venturesomeness of talk has the effect of wit' ('it was never her aspiration to express herself virtuously so much as cleverly—a point to be remembered in extenuation of her words, which were usually worse than she was'). Here she is with her mother before the anticipated first meeting with Grandcourt:

> 'Mrs. Davilow felt her ears tingle when Gwendolen, suddenly throwing herself into the attitude of drawing her bow, said with a look of comic enjoyment—
>
> "How I pity all the other girls at the Archery Meeting—all thinking of Mr. Grandcourt! And they have not a shadow of a chance".
>
> Mrs. Davilow had not presence of mind to answer immediately, and Gwendolen turned quickly round towards her, saying, wickedly "Now you know they have not, mamma. You and my uncle and aunt—you all intend him to fall in love with me".
>
> Mrs. Davilow, piqued into a little strategem, said, "Oh, my dear, that is not so certain. Miss Arrowpoint has charms which you have not".
>
> "I know; but they demand thought. My arrow will pierce him before he has time for thought. He will declare himself my slave—I shall send him round the world to bring me back the wedding-ring of a happy woman—in the meantime all the men who are between him and the title will die of different diseases—he will come back Lord Grandcourt—but without the ring—and fall at my feet. I shall laugh at him—he will rise in resentment—I shall laugh more—he will call for his steed and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ride to Quetcham, where he will find Miss Arrowpoint just married to a needy musician, Mrs. Arrowpoint tearing her cap off, and Mr. Arrowpoint standing by. Exit Lord Grandcourt, who returns to Diplow, and, like M. Jabot, *change de linge*''.

Was ever any young witch like this? You thought of hiding things from her—sat upon the secret and looked innocent, and all the while she knew by the corner of your eye that it was exactly five pounds ten you were sitting on! As well turn the key to keep out the damp! It was probable that by dint of divination she already knew more than any one else did of Mr. Grandcourt. That idea in Mrs. Davilow's mind prompted the sort of question which often comes without any other apparent reason than the faculty of speech and the not knowing what to do with it.

''Why, what kind of man do you imagine him to be, Gwendolen?''

''Let me see!'' said the witch, putting her forefinger to her lips with a little frown, and then stretching out the finger with decision. ''Short—just above my shoulder—trying to make himself tall by turning up his mustache and keeping his beard long—a glass in his right eye to give him an air of distinction—a strong opinion about his waistcoat, but uncertain and trimming about the weather, on which he will try to draw me out. He will stare at me all the while, and the glass in his eye will cause him to make horrible faces, especially when he smiles in a flattering way. I shall cast down my eyes in consequence, and he will perceive that I am not indifferent to his attentions. I shall dream at night that I am looking at the extraordinary face of a magnified insect—and the next morning he will make me the offer of his hand; the sequel as before'' '.

With such sureness of touch does George Eliot render the kind of lively, 'venturesome' lightness it is something more than a second nature in Gwendolen to affect that one's mind reverts again and again to the peculiar reputation enjoyed by Congreve. That kind of praise applies more reasonably to the perfection achieved by George Eliot; to the unfailing rightness with which she gets, in all its turns and moods, her protagonist's airy self-dramatizing sophistication—in which there is a great deal more point than in the alleged 'perfection of style' Congreve gives to Millamant, since Gwendolen's talk is really dramatic, correspondingly significant, and duly 'placed'. We are not offered wit and phrasing for our admiration and the delight of our palates.

It is in the scene between Gwendolen and Grandcourt that George Eliot's mastery of dialogue is most strikingly exhibited. We have it in the brush that follows, in Chap. XI, on their being introduced to each other. It is shown in the rendering of high dramatic tension in Chap. XIII, where Gwendolen takes evasive action in the fact of Grandcourt's clear intent to propose. I will save quotation for the marvellously economical passage (reference

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to it will be in place later) in which she finds that she has placed herself in a position in which she can't not accept, and acceptance seems to determine itself without an act of will. There is a good example of light exchange between them in the following Chapter (XXVIII).

At the moment, what has to be noted is that, though James's Pulcheria of the 'Conversation' says 'they are very much alike' ('it proves how common a type the worldly, *pincé*, selfish young woman seemed to her'), Gwendolen is decidedly not another Rosamond Vincy; her talk is enough to establish that: as Theodora says, she is intelligent. It is with Mrs. Transome that she belongs, being qualified in the same kind of way as Mrs. Transome had been in youth to enact the rôle of daringly brilliant beauty: 'she had never dissociated happiness from personal pre-eminence and *éclat*.[2] She is intelligent—in Mrs. Transome's way:

> 'In the schoolroom her quick mind had taken readily that strong starch of unexplained rules and disconnected facts which saves ignorance from any painful sense of limpness; and what remained of all things knowable, she was conscious of being sufficiently acquainted with through novels, plays and poems. About her French and music, the two justifying accomplishments of a young lady, she felt no ground for uneasiness; and when to all these qualifications, negative and positive, we add the spontaneous sense of capability some happy persons are born with, so that any subject they turn attention to impresses them with their own power of forming a correct judgment on it, who can wonder if Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny'. (Chap. IV).

It is only when compared with George Eliot herself that she is (like Mrs. Transome) to be classed with Rosamond Vincy: none of these three *personæ* is at all like Dorothea, or represents any possibility of the Dorothea relation to the novelist. As James's Theodora says, she is intelligent, 'and therefore tragedy *can* have a hold on her'. She is a young Mrs. Transome, in whom disaster forces a development of conscience; for, in George Eliot's phrase, 'she has a root of conscience in her'. It is there from the beginning in her dread of 'the unpleasant sense of compunction towards her mother, which was the nearest approach to self-condemnation and self-distrust she had known'. We are told also: 'Hers was one of the natures in which exultation invariably carries an infusion of dread ready to curdle and declare itself'. This, which is dramatically exemplified in the episode of the suddenly revealed picture of the dead face during the charades (in Chap. VI) may seem a merely arbitrary *donnée*. Actually, in a youthful egoist, dreading compunction and intelligent enough to dread also the unknown within —the anarchic movement of impulse with its irrevocable con-

[2] 'Church was not markedly distinguished in her mind from the other forms of self-presentation . . . ' (Chap. XLVII).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sequences, it can be seen to be part of the essential case; especially when the trait is associated with an uneasy sense of the precarious status of egoistic 'exultation' and egoistic claims—a sense natural to an imaginative young egoist in the painful impressionableness of immaturity. 'Solitude in any wide sense', we are told, 'impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself'. It all seems to me imagined with truth and subtlety, and admirably analysed. So that when we are told, 'Whatever was accepted as consistent with being a lady she had no scruple about; but from the dim region of what was called disgraceful, wrong, guilty, she shrank with mingled pride and terror', then a whole concrete case is focussed in the summary. The potentiality in Gwendolen of a seismic remorse is concretely established for us.

Here, of course, we have a difference between her and Isabel Archer: remorse—it doesn't belong to James's conception of his young woman that she shall have any need for that. She is merely to make a wrong choice, the wrongness of which is a matter of an error in judgment involving no guilt on her part, though it involves tragic consequences for her. As Mr. Yvor Winters sees it, in his essay on him in *Maule's Curse*, James is concerned, characteristically, to present the choice as free—to present it as pure choice. 'The moral issue, then, since it is primarily an American affair, is freed in most of the Jamesian novels, and in all of the greatest, from the compulsion of a code of manners'. This certainly has a bearing on the difference between Gwendolen and Isabel; between the English young lady in her proper setting of mid-Victorian English 'best society', one who in her 'venturesomeness' 'cannot conceive herself as anything else than a lady',[3] and the 'free' American girl, who moves on the Old World stage as an indefinitely licensed and privileged interloper. But there is a more obviously important difference: 'The moral issue is also freed from economic necessity . . . Isabel Archer is benevolently provided with funds after her story opens, with the express purpose that her action shall thereafter be unhampered'.

The contrast offered by George Eliot's preoccupation is extreme. All her creative power works to the evoking of a system of pressures so intolerable to Gwendolen, and so enclosing, that her final acceptance of Grandcourt seems to issue, not from her will, but from them; if she acts, it is certainly not in freedom, and she hasn't even the sense of exercising choice. Economic necessity plays a determining part. In the earlier phase of the history she has, as much as Isabel Archer, in respect of Lord Warburton and

[3] 'She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of a genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on satin shoes'. (Chap. VI).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gilbert Osmond, free choice in front of her: does she, or does she not, want to marry Grandcourt? But after the meeting with Mrs. Glasher and Grandcourt's children she recoils in disgust and horror from the idea of marriage with him; she recoils from the wrong to others, and from the insult (she feels) offered herself. Then comes the financial disaster, engulfing her family. The effect on Gwendolen, with her indocile egoism and her spoilt child's ignorance of practical realities, and the consequences for her—these are evoked with vivid particularity. There is, pressed on her by the kind and efficient Rector, her uncle, as a duty that is at the same time a gift of fortune she can't fail to accept with grateful gladness, the situation of governess with Mrs. Mompert, the Bishop's wife—who, as a woman of 'strict principle' such as precludes her from 'having a French person in the house', will want to inspect even the Rector's nominee before appointing her: the sheer impossibility of such a 'situation' for Gwendolen is something we are made to feel from the inside. The complementary kind of impossibility, the impossibility of her own plan of exploiting with *éclat* her talents and advantages and becoming a great actress or singer, is brought home to her with crushing and humiliating finality by Herr Klesmer (Chap. XXIII). It is immediately after this interview, which leaves her with no hope of an alternative to Mrs. Mompert and the 'episcopal penitentiary', that Grandcourt's note arrives, asking if he may call. No better illustration of George Eliot's peculiar genius as a novelist—a kind of genius so different from that she is commonly credited with—can be found for quoting than the presentment of Gwendolen's reactions. Here we have the most subtle and convincing analysis rendered, with extraordinary vividness and economy, in the concrete; the shifting tensions in Gwendolen are registered in her speech and outward movements, and the whole is (in an essentially novelistic way) so dramatic that we don't distinguish the elements of description and commentary as such:

> 'Gwendolen let it fall on the floor, and turned away.
>
> "It must be answered, darling", said Mrs. Davilow, timidly. "The man waits".
>
> Gwendolen sank on the settee, clasped her hands, and looked straight before her, not at her mother. She had the expression of one who had been startled by a sound and was listening to know what would come of it. The sudden change of the situation was bewildering. A few minutes before she was looking along an inescapable path of repulsive monotony, with hopeless inward rebellion against the imperious lot which left her no choice: and lo, now, a moment of choice was come. Yet—was it triumph she felt most or terror? Impossible for Gwendolen not to feel some triumph in a tribute to her power at a time when she was first tasting the bitterness of insignificance: again she seemed to be getting a sort of empire over her own life. But how to use it? Here came the terror. Quick, quick, like pictures in a book beaten open with a sense of hurry, came back vividly, yet in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fragments, all that she had gone through in relation to Grandcourt—the allurements, the vacillations, the resolve to accede, the final repulsion; the incisive face of that dark-eyed lady with the lovely boy; her own pledge (was it a pledge not to marry him?)—the new disbelief in the worth of men and things for which that scene of disclosure had become a symbol. That unalterable experience made a vision at which in the first agitated moment, before tempering reflections could suggest themselves, her native terror shrank.

Where was the good of choice coming again? What did she wish? Anything different? No! and yet in the dark seed-growths of consciousness a new wish was forming itself—"I wish I had never known it!" Something, anything she wished for that would have saved her from the dread to let Grandcourt come.

It was no long while—yet it seemed long to Mrs. Davilow, before she thought it well to say, gently—

"It will be necessary for you to write, dear. Or shall I write an answer for you—which you will dictate?"

"No, mamma', said Gwendolen, drawing a deep breath. "But please lay me out the pen and paper".

That was gaining time. Was she to decline Grandcourt's visit—close the shutters—not even look out on what would happen?—though with the assurance that she should remain just where she was? The young activity within her made a warm current through her terror and stirred towards something that would be an event—towards an opportunity in which she could look and speak with the former effectiveness. The interest of the morrow was no longer at a deadlock.

"There is really no reason on earth why you should be so alarmed at the man's waiting for a few minutes, mamma", said Gwendolen, remonstrantly, as Mrs. Davilow, having prepared the writing materials, looked towards her expectantly. "Servants expect nothing else than to wait. It is not to be supposed that I must write on the instant".

"No, dear", said Mrs. Davilow, in the tone of one corrected, turning to sit down and take up a bit of work that lay at hand; "he can wait another quarter of an hour, if you like".

It was a very simple speech and action on her part, but it was what might have been subtly calculated. Gwendolen felt a contradictory desire to be hastened: hurry would save her from deliberate choice.

"I did not mean him to wait long enough for that needle-work to be finished', she said, lifting her hands to stroke the backward curves of her hair, while she rose from her seat and stood still.

"But if you don't feel able to decide?" said Mrs. Davilow, sympathisingly.

"I *must* decide", said Gwendolen, walking to the writing-table and seating herself. All the while there was a busy undercurrent in her, like the thought of a man who keeps up

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a dialogue while he is considering how he can slip away. Why should she not let him come? It bound her to nothing. He had been to Leubronn after her: of course he meant a direct unmistakable renewal of the suit which before had been only implied. What then? She could reject him. Why was she to deny herself the freedom of doing this—which she would like to do?

"If Mr. Grandcourt has only just returned from Leubronn", said Mrs. Davilow, observing that Gwendolen leaned back in her chair after taking the pen in her hand—"I wonder whether he has heard of our misfortunes".

"That could make no difference to a man in his position", said Gwendolen, rather contemptuously.

"It would, to some men", said Mrs. Davilow. "They would not like to take a wife from a family in a state of beggary almost, as we are. Here we are at Offendene, with a great shell over us as usual. But just imagine his finding us at Sawyer's Cottage. Most men are afraid of being bored or taxed by a wife's family. If Mr. Grandcourt did know, I think it a strong proof of his attachment to you".

Mrs. Davilow spoke with unusual emphasis: it was the first time she had ventured to say anything about Grandcourt which would necessarily seem intended as an argument in favour of him, her habitual impression being that such arguments would certainly be useless and might be worse. The effect of her words now was stronger than she could imagine: they raised a new set of possibilities in Gwendolen's mind—a vision of what Grandcourt might do for her mother if she, Gwendolen, did—what she was not going to do. She was so moved by a new rush of ideas, that like one conscious of being urgently called away, she felt that the immediate task must be hastened: the letter must be written, else it might be endlessly deferred. After all, she acted in a hurry as she had wished to do. To act in a hurry was to have a reason for keeping away from an absolute decision, and to leave open as many issues as possible.

She wrote: "Miss Harleth presents her compliments to Mr. Grandcourt. She will be at home after two o'clock to-morrow" '.

Reading this, it is hard to remember that George Eliot was contemporary with Trollope. What later novelist has rendered the inner movement of impulse, the play of motive that issues in speech and act, and underlies formed thought and conscious will, with more penetrating subtlety than she? It is partly done *through* speech and action. But there is also, co-operating with these, a kind of psychological notation that is well represented in the passage quoted above, and is exemplified in 'Quick, quick, like pictures in a book beaten open with a sense of hurry . . . ', and 'yet in the dark seed-growths of consciousness a new wish was forming itself . . . ' and 'The young activity within her made a warm current through her terror . . . ', and 'All the while there was a busy

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under-current in her, like the thought of a man who keeps up a dialogue while he is considering how he can slip away'—and so much else. This notation is one of the distinctive characteristics of her mature style,[4] doing its work always with an inevitable rightness—and *Daniel Deronda* (with *Middlemarch*) was written in the earlier 'seventies. But remarkable as it is, and impressive as would be the assemblage of instances that could be quickly brought together, it is better not to stress it without adding that, as she uses it, it is inseparable from her rendering of 'psychology' in speech and action. It doesn't seem to me that her genius as exhibited in these ways has been anything like duly recognized.

The passage last quoted is not the work of a 'slow and cumbersome mind'. As for the 'hold on dialogue', here is the proposal scene (again quotation must be at length):

> 'In eluding a direct appeal Gwendolen recovered some of her self-possession. She spoke with dignity and looked straight at Grandcourt, whose long, narrow, impenetrable eyes met hers, and mysteriously arrested them: mysteriously; for the subtly-varied drama between man and woman is often such as can hardly be rendered in words put together like dominoes, according to obvious fixed marks. The word of all work, Love, will no more express the myriad modes of mutual attraction, than the word Thought can inform you what is passing through your neighbour's mind. It would be hard to tell on which side—Gwendolen's or Grandcourt's—the influence was more mixed. At that moment his strongest wish was to be completely master of this creature—this piquant combination of maidenliness and mischief: that she knew things which had made her start away from him, spurred him to triumph. And she—ah! piteous equality in the need to dominate!—she was overcome like the thirsty one who is drawn towards the seeming water in the desert, overcome by the suffused sense that here in this man's homage to her lay the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot.
>
> All the while they were looking at each other; and Grandcourt said, slowly and languidly, as if it were of no importance, other things having been settled—
>
> "You will tell me now, I hope, that Mrs. Davilow's loss of fortune will not trouble you further. You will trust me to prevent it from weighing upon her. You will give me the claim to provide against that".

---

[4]The record of Gwendolen's later days of desperation is rich in quotable instances, *e.g.*: 'The thought of his dying would not subsist: it turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought. Fantasies moved within her like ghosts, making no break in her more acknowledged consciousness and finding no obstruction in it: dark rays doing their work invisibly in the broad light'. (Chap. XLVIII).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The little pauses and refined drawlings with which this speech was uttered, gave time for Gwendolen to go through the dream of a life. As the words penetrated her, they had the effect of a draught of wine, which suddenly makes all things easier, desirable things not so wrong, and people in general less disagreeable. She had a momentary phantasmal love for this man who chose his words so well, and who was a mere incarnation of delicate homage. Repugnance, dread, scruples—these were dim as remembered pains, while she was already tasting relief under the immediate pain of hopelessness. She imagined herself already springing to her mother, and being playful again. Yet when Grandcourt had ceased to speak, there was an instant in which she was conscious of being at the turning of the ways.

"You are very generous", she said, not moving her eyes, and speaking with a gentle intonation.

"You accept what will make such things a matter of course?" said Grandcourt, without any new eagerness. "You consent to become my wife?"

This time Gwendolen remained quite pale. Something made her rise from her seat in spite of herself and walk to a little distance. Then she turned and with her hands folded before her stood in silence.

Grandcourt immediately rose too, resting his hat on the chair, but still keeping hold of it. The evident hesitation of this destitute girl to take his splendid offer stung him into a keenness of interest such as he had not known for years. None the less because he attributed her hesitation entirely to her knowledge about Mrs. Glasher. In that attitude of preparation, he said—

"Do you command me to go?" No familiar spirit could have suggested to him more effective words.

"No", said Gwendolen. She could not let him go: that negative was a clutch. She seemed to herself to be, after all, only drifted towards the tremendous decision:—but drifting depends on something besides the currents, when the sails have been set beforehand.

"You accept my devotion?" said Grandcourt, holding his hat by his side and looking straight into her eyes, without other movement. Their eyes meeting in that way seemed to allow any length of pause; but wait as long as she would, how could she contradict herself? What had she detained him for? He had shut out any explanation.

"Yes", came as gravely from Gwendolen's lips as if she had been answering to her name in a court of justice. He received it gravely, and they still looked at each other in the same attitude. Was there ever before such a way of accepting the bliss-giving "Yes"? Grandcourt liked better to be at that distance from her, and to feel under a ceremony imposed by an indefinable prohibition that breathed from Gwendolen's bearing.

But he did at length lay down his hat and advance to take her hand, just pressing his lips upon it and letting it go again.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She thought his behaviour perfect, and gained a sense of freedom which made her almost ready to be mischievous. Her "Yes" entailed so little at this moment, that there was nothing to screen the reversal of her gloomy prospects: her vision was filled by her own release from the Momperts, and her mother's release from Sawyer's Cottage. With a happy curl of the lips, she said—

"Will you not see mamma? I will fetch her".

"Let us wait a little", said Grandcourt, in his favourite attitude, having his left forefinger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket, and with his right caressing his whisker, while he stood near Gwendolen and looked at her—not unlike a gentleman who has a felicitous introduction at an evening-party.

"Have you anything else to say to me?" said Gwendolen, playfully.

"Yes—I know having things said to you is a great bore", said Grandcourt, rather sympathetically.

"Not when they are things I like to hear".

"Will it bother you to ask how soon we can be married?"

"I think it will, to-day", said Gwendolen, putting up her chin saucily.

"Not to-day, then, but to-morrow. Think of it before I come to-morrow. In a fortnight—or three weeks—as soon as possible".

"Ah, you think you will be tired of my company", said Gwendolen. "I notice when people are married the husband is not so much with his wife as when they are engaged. But perhaps I shall like that better too".

She laughed charmingly.

"You shall have whatever you like", said Grandcourt.

"And nothing that I don't like?—please say that, because I think I dislike what I don't like more than I like what I like", said Gwendolen, finding herself in the woman's paradise where all her nonsense is adorable'.

It will be noted how beautifully the status of Gwendolen's spontaneously acted self is defined by her relieved and easy assumption of it once the phase of tense negativity has issued in 'yes'. And it was clearly not this self that pronounced the 'Yes'; nor does it come from a profound integrated self. George Eliot's way of putting it is significant: ' "Yes" came as gravely from Gwendolen's lips as if she had been answering to her name in a court of justice". This is a response that issues out of something like an abeyance of will; it is determined for her. No acquiescence could look less like an expression of free choice. Yet we don't feel that Gwendolen is therefore not to be judged as a moral agent. The 'Yes' is a true expression of her moral economy; that the play of tensions should have as its upshot this response has been established by habits of valuation and by essential choices lived. 'She seemed to herself to be, after all, only drifted towards the tremendous decision:—but drifting depends on something besides

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the currents, when the sails have been set beforehand'. Even before what she saw as a moral objection arose to confront her, she had had no sense of herself as able to settle her relations with Grandcourt by a clear and free act of choice:

> 'Even in Gwendolen's mind that result was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions towards which she was being precipitated, as if they were two sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which she should fall. This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life—doing as she liked—seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do'. (Chap. XIII).

But we aren't inclined to think of her as being then any the less a subject for moral evaluation. We note rather, as entering into the account, that she gets a thrill out of the surrender to tense uncertainty, and that it is not for nothing that at her first introduction to us, in the opening, she figures as the gambler, lost in the intoxication of hazard. The situation, in respect of Gwendolen's status as a moral agent, isn't essentially altered by the reinforcement, in conflicting senses, of the pulls and pressures bearing on the act of choice: the supervention of a powerful force, represented by Mrs. Glasher, carrying Gwendolen in recoil from Grandcourt, which is countered by a new pressure towards acceptance—the economic one (translatable by Gwendolen into terms of duty towards her mother).[5]

We note, with regard to Gwendolen's attitude towards what she sees as the strong moral ground for refusing Grandcourt, that 'in the dark seed-growths of consciousness a new wish was forming itself—"I wish I had never known it" '. There is much concrete psychological notation to this effect, deriving from the insight of a great novelist; that it has a moral significance, a relation to that ostensibly mechanical and unwilled "Yes", is plain. But it is possible to overstress Gwendolen's guilt in the matter of Mrs. Glasher, a guilt that is so very conscious. George Eliot's appreci-

---

[5]'The cheque was for five hundred pounds, and Gwendolen turned it towards her mother, with the letter.

"How very kind and delicate!", said Mrs. Davilow, with much feeling. "But I really should like better not to be dependent on a son-in-law. I and the girls could get along very well".

"Mamma, if you say that again, I will not marry him", said Gwendolen, angrily.

"My dear child, I trust you are not going to marry only for my sake", said Mrs. Davilow deprecatingly.

Gwendolen tossed her head on the pillow away from her mother, and let the iing lie. She was irritated at this attempt to take away a motive'. (Chap. XXVIII).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ation of the moral issues doesn't coincide with that of her protagonist —or of the conventional Victorian moralist. For George Eliot the essential significance of Gwendolen's case lies in the egoism expressed here (the passage follows immediately on that last quoted, in which she 'could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do'):

> 'The prospect of marrying Grandcourt really seemed more attractive to her than she had believed beforehand that any marriage could be: the dignities, the luxuries, the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to, which had now come close to her, and within her power to secure or to lose, took hold of her nature as if it had been the strong odour of what she had only imagined and longed for before. And Grandcourt himself? He seemed as little of a flaw in his fortunes as a lover and husband could possibly be. Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give his countenance without looking ridiculous'.

It is again a case of Hubris with its appropriate Nemesis. What first piqued her into turning on 'this Mr. Grandcourt' a quality of intention no other man had exacted from her was that 'he seemed to feel his own importance more than he did hers—a sort of unreasonableness few of us can tolerate'. She had a similar attraction for him. When, too late, she knows to the full the mistakenness of her assumptions and finds herself beaten at her own game, the great hold Grandcourt has over her lies in her moral similarity to him: 'For she too, with her melancholy distaste for things, preferred that her distaste should include admirers'. And the best she can do is 'to bear this last great gambling loss with perfect self-possession'. 'True, she still saw that she "would manage differently from mamma"; but her management now only meant that she would carry her troubles with an air of perfect self-possession, and let none suspect them'. As for what she takes to be her guilt, pride in her over-rides remorse: what she most cares about is that Grandcourt shall not know that she knew of Mrs. Glasher before accepting him (though ironically he has, all along, known, and his knowledge had added to Gwendolen's attractiveness for him). The consequent torment reminds us closely of Mrs. Transome's Nemesis: 'now that she was a wife, the sense that Grandcourt was gone to Gadsmere [his home for Mrs. Glasher and his children] was like red heat near a burn. She had brought on herself this indignity in her own eyes—this humiliation of being doomed to a terrified silence lest her husband should discover with what sort of consciousness she had married him; and as she had said to Deronda, she "must go on" '. And 'in spite of remorse, it still seemed the worse result of her marriage that she should in any way make a spectacle of herself; and her humiliation was lightened by her thinking that only Mrs. Glasher was aware of the fact that caused it'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So much pride and courage and sensitiveness and intelligence fixed in a destructive deadlock through false valuation and self-ignorance—this is what makes Gwendolen a tragic figure. And as George Eliot establishes for our contemplation the complexities of inner constitution and outer conditions that make Gwendolen look so different from Isabel Archer, she is exhibiting what we recognize from our own most intimate experience, to be as much the behaviour of a responsible moral agent, and so as much amenable to moral judgment, as any human behaviour can be. Not of course, that our attitude is that of the judge towards the prisoner in the dock; but neither is it that of *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. It is, or should be (with George Eliot's help), George Eliot's own, which is that of a great novelist, concerned with human and moral valuation in a way proper to her art—it is a way that doesn't let us forget that what is being lit up for us lies within.

And turning once more, for a moment, to Isabel Archer, we may ask whether, in this matter of choice, she is essentially as different from Gwendolen as she is made to appear: isn't her appearance of being so much more free to choose with her 'ethical sensibility' largely illusion? She herself must look back on her treasured freedom of choice with some irony when, after her marriage, she has learnt of the relations between her husband and Madame Merle, and of the part played by Madame Merle in her 'choosing' to marry Osmond. But for us it is the wider significance of the revelation that needs dwelling on. It is not surprising that so young a girl, and one so new to the social climate, should have been unable to value at their true worth either Madame Merle or Gilbert Osmond; and, we go on to reflect, how could, in any case, anyone so little experienced in life, knowing—as is inevitable at the age—so little about herself, and (inevitably) so vague about what in concrete terms the 'fineness' she means to achieve in life might amount to—how could such a girl exercise a choice that should be essentially more than Gwendolen's a free expression of ethical sensibility? Doesn't it largely come down to the greater specificity we have noted as characterizing George Eliot in comparison with James? And isn't there, in fact, something evasive about James's inexplicitness; something equivocal about his indirectness and the subtlety of implication with which he pursues his aim of excluding all but the 'essential'?

What, we ask, thinking by contrast of the fulness and immediacy with which we have Gwendolen, is the *substance* of Isabel's interest for us? In spite of such things as the fine passage in Chapter XLII of *The Portrait of a Lady* that evokes her finding 'the infinite vista of a multiplied life to be a dark alley with a dead wall at the end', we see that James's marvellous art is devoted to contenting us with very little in the way of inward realization of Isabel, and to keeping us interested instead, in a kind of psychological detective work—keeping us intently wondering from the outside, and constructing, on a strict economy of evidence, what

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is going on inside. And, if we consider, we find that the constructions to which we are led are of such a kind as not to challenge, or to bear with comfort, any very searching test in terms of concrete reality. The difference between James and George Eliot is largely a matter of what he leaves out. The leaving out, of course, is a very positive art that offers the compensation. But it is not the less fair to say that what James does with *Daniel Deronda* (or rather with *Gwendolen Harleth*) throws a strong light on the characteristic working, the significance, of that peculiar American moral sense which Mr. Winters discusses in relation to the New England background—a light in which its limiting tendency appears as drastic indeed. *The Portrait of a Lady* belongs to the sappiest phase of James's art, when the hypertrophy of technique hadn't yet set in; but, in the light of the patent relation to *Gwendolen Harleth*, we can see already a certain disproportion between an intensity of art that has at the same time an effect of moral intensity and the actual substance of human interest provided. That James should have done *this* with what George Eliot provided him with, and done it with such strenuously refined art!—that registers our reaction.

Actually, we can see that the trouble is that he derives so much more from George Eliot than he suspects: he largely mistakes the nature of his inspiration, which is not so much from life as he supposes. He has been profoundly impressed by the irony of Gwendolen's married situation, and is really moved by the desire to produce a similar irony. But he fails to produce the fable that gives inevitability and moral significance. He can remain unaware of his failure because he is so largely occupied (a point that can be illustrated in detail) in transposing George Eliot, whose power is due to the profound psychological truth of her conception, and the consistency with which she developes it.

Isabel Archer, for all James's concern (if Mr. Winters is right) to isolate in her the problem of ethical choice, has neither a more intense nor a richer moral significance than Gwendolen Harleth; but very much the reverse. If this way of stating James's interest in her seems obtuse, and we are to appreciate a fully ironical intention in his presentment of the irony of her case, and are to say (as surely we are) that he intends an ironical 'placing' of her illusion, the adverse criticism of James still holds. For we can still see Mr. Winter's excuse for stating things in *his* way: beyond any question we are invited to share a valuation of Isabel that is incompatible with a really critical irony. We can't even say that James makes an implicit critical comment on the background of American idealism that fostered her romantic confidence in life and in her ability to choose: he admires her so much, and demands for her such admiration and homage, that he can't be credited with 'placing' the conditions that, as an admirable American girl, she represents. James's lack of specificity favours an evasiveness, and the evasiveness, if at all closely questioned, yields inconsistency of a kind that largely empties the theme of *The Portrait of a*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lady of moral substance. And in James's later work we again and again find ourselves asking, without finding a satisfactory answer: What moral substance is there, what is there that can be defined in terms of human interest, to justify this sustained and strenuous suggestion that important issues are involved, important choices are to be made? His kind of preoccupation with eliminating the inessential clearly tends to become the pursuit of an essential that is illusory.

If any doubt should linger as to whether one is justified in talking about what James does with *Gwendolen Harleth*, it should be settled finally by a consideration of Osmond in relation to Grandcourt: Osmond so plainly *is* Grandcourt, hardly disguised, that the general derivative relation of James's novel to George Eliot's becomes quite unquestionable. It is true that Grandcourt is no aesthetic connoisseur, but Osmond's interest in articles of *virtù* amounts to nothing more than a notation for a kind of cherished fastidiousness of conscious, but empty, superiority that is precisely Grandcourt's: 'From the first she had noticed that he had nothing of the fool in his composition but that by some subtle means he communicated to her the impression that all the folly lay with other people, who did what he did not care to do'. That might very well be an account of the effect of Osmond on Isabel, but it comes from George Eliot. Grandcourt, as an English aristocrat whose status licenses any amount of languid disdain doesn't need a symbolic dilettantism:

> 'He himself knew what personal repulsion was—nobody better: his mind was much furnished with a sense of what brutes his fellow-creatures were, both masculine and feminine; what odious familiarities they had, what smirks, what modes of flourishing their handkerchiefs, what costumes, what lavender-water, what bulging eyes, and what foolish notions of making themselves agreeable by remarks which were not wanted. In this critical view of mankind there was affinity between him and Gwendolen before their marriage, and we know that she had been attractingly wrought upon by the refined negations he presented to her'. (Chap. LIV).

This equally describes Osmond, of whom it might equally well be said that 'he is a man whose grace of bearing has long been moulded on an experience of boredom', and that 'he has worn out all his healthy interest in things'. All either cares about is to be assured that he feels superior; and the contemptible paradox of a superiority that is nothing unless assured of itself by these whose judgment it affects to despise is neatly 'placed' by George Eliot here:

> 'It is true that Grandcourt went about with the sense that he did not care a languid curse for any one's admiration; but this state of not-caring, just as much as desire, required its related object—namely, a world of admiring or envying spectators: for if you are fond of looking stonily at smiling persons, the persons

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must be there and they must smile—a rudimentary truth which is surely forgotten by those who complain of mankind as generally contemptible, since any other aspect of the race must disappoint the voracity of their contempt'.

In Grandcourt, of course, we have as elsewhere her strength, her advantage, of specificity. Our sense of the numbing spell in which his languidly remorseless domination holds Gwendolen doesn't depend upon suggestive inexplicitnesses, sinister overtones and glimpses from a distance. 'Grandcourt had become a blank uncertainty to her in everything but this, that he would do just what he willed': we don't feel him as less sinister and formidable than Osmond because we see him deliberately working to procure this effect (of which we understand perfectly the conditions) in a number of dramatic scenes that have all George Eliot's explicitness and fulness of actuality. Such scenes are that in which he lets her know that he understands perfectly why she has made the surreptitious call on Miss Lapidoth from which he catches her returning; that in which he tells her that she is to learn about his will from the hated Lush; and that, very short, but with an extraordinary power to disturb, in which he surprises her with Deronda—the scene that ends, with reference to the announced yachting cruise which she sees as blessedly releasing her to her mother's company: 'No, you will go with me'. (All these are in Chap. XLVIII).

In these scenes the sharpness of significant particularity with which the outward action is registered is very striking.

> 'She was frightened at her own agitation, and began to unbutton her gloves that she might button them again, and bite her lips over the pretended difficulty'.

The whole is *seen*, and the postures and movements are given with vivid precision. James's Constantius, contrasting George Eliot with Turgènev—he the 'poet', she the 'philosopher'—says: 'One cares for the aspect of things and the other cares for the reason of things'. Nowhere is this characterization more patently wide of the mark than in those places where her supreme *intelligence* is most apparent. It is precisely because she cares for the 'reason' of things that she can render the aspect so vividly; her intelligence informs her perception and her visual imagination. The vividness of the rendering is significance.

As fine a sustained example of this power of hers is to be found in Chap. XXX, where Grandcourt visits Gadsmere in order to tell Mrs. Glasher of the coming marriage and to get from her the diamonds for Gwendolen. Not only is Mrs. Glasher afraid of him, he is afraid of her, for 'however he might assert his independence of Mrs. Glasher's past, he had made a past for himself which was a stronger yoke than any he could impose. He must ask for the diamonds which he had promised Gwendolen'. The inner drama in either as they act upon one another is so vividly present to us in outer movement that we seem to be watching a play; till 'Amid such caressing signs of mutual fear they parted'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mrs. Glasher is one of the admirably done subordinate characters in the book, which, when we have cut away the bad half, is not left thinly populated. Mrs. Davilow, the Gascoigne family, Gwendolen's *bête-noire* Mr. Lush ('with no active compassion or good-will, he had just as little active malevolence, being chiefly occupied in liking his particular pleasure'), Mrs. Arrowpoint, Miss Arrowpoint (near kin to Mary Garth)—these are all *there* with a perfect rightness of presence, and with a quality of life that makes them George Eliot characters and no one else's.

And then there is Herr Klesmer, who, though a minor actor, has, for us, a major significance. Pointing to him, we can say: here we have something that gives George Eliot an advantage, not only over Jane Austen (against whom we feel no challenge to press the point), but also over the James of *The Portrait of a Lady*. The point is so important that a generous measure of illustration seems in place. Here, then, is Herr Klesmer's incongruous presence at the Archery Meeting.

> 'We English are a miscellaneous people, and any chance fifty of us will present many varieties of animal architecture or facial ornament; but it must be admitted that our prevailing expression is not that of a lively, impassioned race, preoccupied with the ideal and carrying the real as a mere make-weight. The strong point of the English gentleman pure is the easy style of his figure and clothing; he objects to marked ins and outs in his costume, and he also objects to looking inspired.
>
> Fancy an assemblage where the men had all that ordinary stamp of the well-bred Englishman, watching the entrance of Herr Klesmer—his mane of hair floating backward in massive inconsistency with the chimney-pot hat, which had the look of having been put on for a joke above his pronounced but well-modelled features and powerful clean-shaven mouth and chin; his tall thin figure clad in a way which, not being strictly English, was all the worse for its apparent emphasis of intention. Draped in a loose garment with a Florentine *beretta* on his head, he would have been fit to stand by the side of Leonardo da Vinci; but how when he presented himself in trousers, which were not what English feeling demanded about the knees?—and when the fire that showed itself in his glances and the movements of his head, as he looked round him with curiosity, was turned into comedy by a hat which ruled that mankind should have well-cropped hair and a staid demeanour, such, for example, as Mr. Arrowpoint's, whose nullity of face and perfect tailoring might pass everywhere without ridicule? One sees why it is often better for greatness to be dead, and to have got rid of the outward man.
>
> Many present knew Klesmer, or knew of him; but they had only seen him on candle-light occasions when he appeared simply as a musician, and he had not yet that supreme, world-wide celebrity which makes an artist great to the most ordinary people

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by their knowledge of his great expensiveness. It was literally a new light for them to see him in—presented unexpectedly on this July afternoon in an exclusive society: some were inclined to laugh, others felt a little disgust at the want of judgment shown by the Arrowpoints in this use of the introductory card.

"What extreme guys those artistic fellows usually are!" said young Clintock to Gwendolen'.

The foreigner at English social and sporting functions, intrinsically ludicrous because of his ignorance of what's done—or rather, what isn't done, what isn't said, and what isn't worn, has always been a familiar figure in *Punch*. George Eliot doesn't miss the comic element in Klesmer's appearance, but she uses him to 'place' the Philistinism of English society, and the complacent unintelligence of its devotion to Good Form. James, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, can exhibit no such critical attitude towards the country house and its civilization.

George Eliot's use of Herr Klesmer is the more effective because her attitude is so complete and balanced: she sees what is genuinely laughable in the Teutonic Intellectual and licensed and conscious Artist—witness the conversation between them at the dance in Chap. XI.

But perhaps in the light of our present interest, the richest episode in which he figures is that with Mr. Bult (perfect name—how good George Eliot's names are):

'Meanwhile enters the expectant peer, Mr. Bult, an esteemed party man who, rather neutral in private life, had strong opinions concerning the districts of the Niger, was much at home also in the Brazils, spoke with decision of affairs in the South Seas, was studious of his parliamentary and itinerant speeches, and had the general solidity and suffusive pinkness of a healthy Briton on the central table-land of life. Catherine, aware of a tacit understanding that he was an undeniable husband for an heiress, had nothing to say against him but that he was thoroughly tiresome to her. Mr. Bult was amiably confident, and had no idea that his insensibility to counterpoint could ever be reckoned against him. Klesmer he hardly regarded in the light of a serious human being who ought to have a vote; and he did not mind Miss Arrowpoint's addiction to music any more than her probable expenses in antique lace. He was consequently a little amazed at an after-dinner outburst of Klesmer's on the lack of idealism in English politics which left all mutuality between distant races to be determined simply by the need of a market: the crusades, to his mind, had at least this excuse, that they had a banner of sentiment round which generous feelings could rally: of course, the scoundrels rallied too, but what then? they rally in equal force round your advertisement van of "Buy cheap, sell dear". On this theme Klesmer's eloquence, gesticulatory and other, went on for a little while like stray fireworks accidentally ignited, and then sank into immovable silence. Mr. Bult was not surprised

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that Klesmer's opinions should be flighty, but was astonished at his command of English idiom and his ability to put a point in a way that would have told at a constituents' dinner—to be accounted for probably by his being a Pole, or a Czech, or something of that fermenting sort, in a state of political refugeeism which had obliged him to make a profession of his music; and that evening in the drawing-room he for the first time went up to Klesmer at the piano, Miss Arrowpoint being near, and said—

"I had no idea before that you were a political man".

Klesmer's only answer was to fold his arms, put out his nether lip, and stare at Mr. Bult.

"You must have been used to public speaking. You speak uncommonly well, though I don't agree with you. From what you said about sentiment, I fancy you are a Panslavist".

"No; my name is Elijah. I am the Wandering Jew", said Klesmer, flashing a smile at Miss Arrowpoint, and suddenly making a mysterious wind-like rush backwards and forwards on the piano. Mr. Bult felt this buffoonery rather offensive and Polish, but—Miss Arrowpoint being there—did not like to move away.

"Herr Klesmer has cosmopolitan ideas", said Miss Arrowpoint, trying to make the best of the situation. "He looks forward to a fusion of races".

"With all my heart", said Mr. Bult, willing to be gracious. "I was sure he had too much talent to be a mere musician".

"Ah, sir, you are under some mistake there", said Klesmer, firing up. "No man has too much talent to be a musician. Most men have too little. A creative artist is no more a mere musician than a great statesman is a mere politician. We are not ingenious puppets, sir, who live in a box and look out on the world only when it is gaping for amusement. We help to rule the nations and make the age as much as any other public men. We count ourselves on level benches with legislators. And a man who speaks effectively through music is compelled to something more difficult than parliamentary eloquence".

With the last word Klesmer wheeled from the piano and walked away.

Miss Arrowpoint coloured, and Mr. Bult observed with his usual phlegmatic solidity, "Your pianist does not think small beer of himself".

"Herr Klesmer is something more than a pianist", said Miss Arrowpoint, apologetically. "He is a great musician, in the fullest sense of the word. He will rank with Schubert and Mendelssohn".

"Ah, you ladies understand these things", said Mr. Bult, none the less convinced that these things were frivolous because Klesmer had shown himself a coxcomb'.

What we see here is not a novelist harmed, or disabled, by the intellectual of the *Westminster Review*. The knowledge and interest shown, the awareness of the political world, is that of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

associate of Spenser and Mill. But the attitude is not their's. Bult is a far more effective 'placing' of a prevailing Victorian ethos than Podsnap: George Eliot really understands what she is dealing with—understands as well as the professional student of politics and the men of the public world; and more, understands as these cannot. In short, it is her greatness that she retains all the provincial strength and virtue while escaping, as no other Victorian novelist does, the limitations of provinciality.

As for the bad part, there *is* nothing to do but cut it away—in spite of what James, as Constantius, finds to say for it:

> 'The universe forcing itself with a slow, inexorable pressure into a narrow, complacent, and yet after all extremely sensitive mind—that is Gwendolen's story. And it becomes completely characteristic in that her supreme perception of the fact that the world is whirling past her is in the disappointment not of a base but of an exalted passion. The very chance to embrace what the author is so fond of calling a "larger life" seems refused to her. She is punished for being "narrow", and she is not allowed a chance to expand. Her finding Deronda pre-engaged to go to the East and stir up the race-feeling of the Jews strikes me as a wonderfully happy invention. The irony of the situation, for poor Gwendolen, is almost grotesque, and it makes one wonder whether the whole heavy structure of the Jewish question in the story was not built up by the author for the express purpose of giving its proper force to this particular stroke'.

If it was (which we certainly can't accept as a complete account of it) built up by the author for this purpose, then it is too disastrously null to have any of the intended force to give. If, having entertained such a purpose, George Eliot had justified it, *Daniel Deronda* would have been a very great novel indeed. As things are, there is, lost under that damning title, an actual great novel to be extricated. And to extricate it for separate publication as *Gwendolen Harleth* seems to me the most likely way of getting recognition for it. *Gwendolen Harleth* would have some rough edges, but it would be a self-sufficient and very substantial whole (it would by modern standards be a decidedly long novel). Deronda would be confined to what was necessary for his rôle of lay-confessor to Gwendolen, and the final cut would come after the death by drowning, leaving us with a vision of Gwendolen as she painfully emerges from her hallucinated worst conviction of guilt and confronts the daylight fact about Deronda's intentions.

It has seemed necessary to carry this examination so much into detail in order to give due force to the contention that George Eliot's greatness is of a different kind from that she has been generally credited with. And by way of concluding on this emphasis I will adduce once again her most intelligently appreciative critic, Henry James:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> 'She does not strike me as naturally a critic, less still as naturally a sceptic; her spontaneous part is to observe life and to feel it, to feel it with admirable depth. Contemplation, sympathy and faith—something like that, I should say, would have been her natural scale. If she had fallen upon an age of enthusiastic assent to old articles of faith, it seems to me possible that she would have had a more perfect, a more consistent and graceful development than she actually had'.

There is, I think, a complete misconception here. George Eliot's development may not have been 'perfect' or 'graceful', and 'consistent' is not precisely the adjective one would choose for it; yet she went on developing to the end, as few writers do, and achieved the most remarkable expression of her distinctive genius in her last work: her art in *Gwendolen Harleth* is at its maturest. And her profound insight into the moral nature of man is essentially that of one whose critical intelligence has been turned intensively on her faiths. A sceptic by nature or culture—indeed no; but that is not because her intelligence, a very powerful one, doesn't freely illuminate all her interests and convictions. That she should be thought depressing (as, for instance, Leslie Stephen thinks her) always surprises me. She exhibits a traditional moral sensibility expressing itself, not within a frame of 'old articles of faith' (as James obviously intends the phrase), but nevertheless with perfect sureness, in judgments that involve confident positive standards and yet affect us as simply the report of luminous intelligence. She deals in the weakness and ordinariness of human nature, but doesn't find it contemptible, or show either animus or self-deceiving indulgence towards it; and, distinguished and noble as she is, we have in reading her the feeling that she is in and of the humanity she presents with so clear and disinterested a vision. For us in these days, it seems to me, she is a peculiarly fortifying and wholesome author, and a suggestive one: she might well be pondered by those who tend to prescribe simple recourses—to suppose, say, that what Charlotte Yonge has to offer may be helpfully relevant—in face of the demoralizations and discouragements of an age that isn't one of 'enthusiastic assent to old articles of faith'.

As for her rank among novelists, I take the challenge from a representative purveyor of currency, Oliver Elton: what he says we may confidently assume that thousands of the cultivated think it reasonable to say, and thousands of students in 'Arts' courses are learning to say, either in direct study of him, or in the lecture-room. He says, then, in discussing the 'check to George Eliot's reputation' given by the coming 'into fuller view' of 'two other masters of fiction'—Meredith and Hardy: 'Each of these novelists saw the world of men and women more freely than George Eliot had done; and they brought into relief one of her greatest deficiencies, namely, that while exhaustively describing life, she is apt to miss the spirit of life itself'. I can only say that this, for anyone whose critical education has begun, should be breath-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taking in its absurdity, and affirm my conviction that, by the side of George Eliot—and the comparison shouldn't be necessary, Meredith appears as a shallow exhibitionist (his famous 'intelligence' a laboured and vulgar brilliance) and Hardy, decent as he is, as a provincial manufacturer of gauche and heavy fictions that sometimes have corresponding virtues. For a positive indication of her place and quality I think of a Russian, not Turgènev, but a far greater, Tolstoy—who, we all know, is pre-eminent in getting 'the spirit of life itself'. George Eliot, of course, is not as transcendently great as Tolstoy, but she *is* great, and great in the same way. The extraordinary reality of *Anna Karenina* (his supreme masterpiece, I think) comes of an intense moral interest in human nature that provides the light and courage for a profound psychological analysis. This analysis is rendered in art (and *Anna Karenina, pace* Matthew Arnold, is wonderfully closely worked) by means that are like those used by George Eliot in *Gwendolen Harleth*—a proposition that will bear a great deal of considering in the presence of the texts. Of George Eliot it can in turn be said that her best work has a Tolstoyan depth and reality.

F. R. LEAVIS.

[Concluded].

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

HENRY JAMES AND THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION.

Henry James, we know, had oddities that grew upon him in his later years. So, if we care to take it, we have an easy explanation to hand when we read the letter he wrote to John Bailey on November 11th, 1912, declining the offered chairmanship of the English Association:

> 'It is out of my power to meet your invitation with the least decency or grace. For me, frankly, my dear John, there is simply no question of these things: I am a mere stony, ugly monster of *Dis*sociation and Detachment. I have never in all my life gone in for these other things, but have dodged and shirked and successfully evaded them—to the best of my power at least, and so far as they have in fact assaulted me: all my instincts and the very essence of any poor thing that I might, or even still may, trump up for the occasion as my "genius" have been against them, and are more against them at this day than ever, though two or three of them (meaning by "them" the collective and congregated bodies, the splendid organizations, aforesaid) have successfully got their teeth, in spite of all I could do, into my bewildered and badgered antiquity . . . I can't go into it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all much—but the rough sense of it is that I believe only in absolutely independent, individual and lonely virtue, and in the serenely unsociable (or if need be at a pinch sulky and sullen) practice of the same; the observation of a lifetime having convinced me that no fruit ripens but under that temporarily graceless rigour, and that the associational process for bringing it on is but a bright and hollow artifice, all vain and delusive. (I speak here for the Arts—or of my own poor attempt at one or two of them; the other matters must speak for themselves). Let me even while I am about it heap up the measure of my grossness: the mere dim vision of presiding or what is called, I believe, taking the chair, at a speechifying public dinner, fills me, and has filled me all my life, with such aversion and horror that I have in the most odious manner consistently refused for years to be present on such occasions even as a guest pre-assured of protection and effacement . . . I have at such times let them know in advance that I was utterly not to be counted on, and have indeed quite gloried in my shame; sitting at home the while and gloating over the fact that I wasn't present'.

How regrettable was this unnecessary scruple, or moroseness, or timidity, in James. Surely he could see that it was his duty to lend his prestige to the work of an Association whose explicit aims are 'To uphold the standards of English writing and speech' and 'To spread as widely as possible the knowledge and enjoyment of English Literature'. The advantages of associating the maintenance of the essential standards with the cultivation of others for which recognition is more readily got are surely plain: if social solidarity can't be promoted for good ends, what hope is there? Good-mixing has its uses.

But perhaps James offered himself the excuse that his backwardness was unlikely to set a dangerous example. And had he been able to project himself forward some decades and then look back he would no doubt have felt that his expectations had been justified. And in *News-Letter No. 2* of the English Association (September, 1946)—which might all the same have surprised him—he would have read the appreciative announcement of yet another willing President-elect:

'The recent publication of the two first volumes of Sir Osbert Sitwell's autobiography, *Left Hand, Right Hand* and *The Scarlet Tree*, besides being a literary event of the first magnitude has gone some way towards satisfying the interest felt by all lovers of wit, poetry, and "fine writing" in the personality of the head of the Sitwell family. Among members of the English Association this interest is naturally heightened by the knowledge that he will be next year's President.

'Eighth holder of a Baronetcy created on the eve of the Regency and scion of a house whose roots strike deep into the ancient earth of England, Sir Osbert's tastes and activities have never been those of the typical Derbyshire squire—though, to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be sure, one of his forbears *did* hunt a tiger in the woods about Renishaw. In the realm of letters our President Elect has left hardly any province uninvaded, and he has cultivated each separate field with characteristic energy, originality and distinction'.

We are told (in his own words) that 'he has conducted, in conjunction with his brother and sister, a series of skirmishes and hand-to-hand battles against the Philistine' and that he instituted '"Joy through Intelligence Campaign" (Inc.)'. And the *News-Letter* proceeds to cull for us the vivacities that stand against Sir Osbert's name in *Who's Who*: 'students of that instructive annual have long since perceived with delight that [his] recreations assume a different form every year'. 'Among his self-recorded activities perhaps the most fascinating is the Rememba Bomba League, "founded in 1924: reconstituted, 1927". But, alas, the badge of membership is not described'.

The English Association, it will be seen, goes ahead wholeheartedly, but without undue solemnity, with its work of upholding standards. The nature of those standards may be gathered from any number of *English*, the quarterly it publishes. The ethos of *English* is fairly suggested by the passages quoted above from the *News-Letter*. Some years ago we commented on the Association's official statement that it 'lived on the earnings' of *Poems of To-Day* (an educational work on which Mr. T. S. Eliot made some blunt remarks in *The Criterion*). The Association has been true to its traditions, as both the reviews and the verse in *English* bear witness. And it is all in keeping that the hundreds of teacher-members who have instructed their pupils in *Poems of To-Day* should now teach them to admire, not only Sir Osbert's prose and wit, but also Miss Edith Sitwell's poetry.

All those who have ever been concerned in any attempt to make university literary studies minister to life would find a file of *English* worth glancing through—for the evidence so abundantly exposed bears even more significantly upon universities than upon schools. It must suffice here to say that if such investigators looked up a 'Sociological Note' that appeared in *Scrutiny* (Vol. XII, No. 1), under the title 'The Discipline of Letters', they might agree that the analysis given in that Note was strikingly confirmed: in *English* the associational spirit prevails completely and complacently —prevails as a defence, certainly *not* of living literature, or of the kind of life of mind and spirit that makes literature a living influence.

'THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT'.

It is pleasant, after the foregoing observations, to be able to comment to different effect. Perhaps not everyone who gave up the brightened and modernized *Times Literary Supplement* some years ago has become aware of the recent improvement. It is a marked one, and the *T.L.S.* is now, on the whole, a credit to English critical journalism. The first thing one notes is the dis-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appearance of the anti-highbrow leaders and middles that apparently expressed an editorial policy. It is still necessary to make a distinction between the leading articles, which are usually depressing, and the reviews. Not all the reviews, of course, are good, but enough of them are to make it plain that there is an intelligent and disinterested controlling purpose. Again and again, when the handling in the *T.L.S.* of an author favoured in Bloomsbury is compared with that in *The New Statesman*, it will be found that the *T.L.S.* has performed the function of criticism—and been left to perform it. Here, for instance, from the issue for December 7th, is its placing of an author cried up by the modish gallophils who made an exhibition of themselves over Aragon:

> 'There were not a few people in this country who, having read Vercors' *Le Silence de la Mer*, could only raise their eyebrows at the fanfare of trumpets which it had called forth. Now comes an English translation of *La Marche à l'Etoile*, another *nouvelle* of a similar sort, and this time one's eyebrows remain motionless and one's heart sinks instead. For the sentimentality, the imaginative falsity, the nationalistic unction of the second tale by Vercors are distressing in the extreme . . . the whole concoction indeed, is shockingly sentimental and a disservice to the restoration of the confidence of the French in themselves'.

AN IRISH MONTHLY.

The Bell is a monthly coming from Dublin that is now to be distributed by The Pilot Press (45 Great Russell Street, W.C.1: the price is 1/6 a copy, the yearly subscription 18/-, plus 1/6 postage). To judge by the December number (in spite of the write-up of Aldous Huxley) this review is intelligently directed: the promise of a lively criticism independent of the English set-up certainly deserves attention. In this number, for instance, 'The Pieties of Evelyn Waugh' by Donat O'Donnell deals aptly with a writer who has not only been acclaimed by Catholic critics, but has also—in spite of the radical anti-Leftish tendencies that Mr. O'Donnell diagnoses in him—enjoyed a cult among intellectuals of the *New Statesman* milieu.

'THE KENYON REVIEW' AND 'SCRUTINY'.

As far as one can judge with the limited opportunities one has on this side of the Atlantic, *The Kenyon Review* is the best of those American reviews which, published from universities, give American criticism so marked an advantage over British. The issue for Autumn, 1946, contains a long essay by Quentin Anderson, 'Henry James and the New Jerusalem', which no student of James can afford to miss. It deals with the influence on the novelist of his father's system of ideas. The book promised by Mr. Anderson is one to look forward to.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the same issue Mr. Eric Bentley, reviewing L. C. Knights's *Explorations*, hands *Scrutiny* a handsome bouquet:

> 'One may dislike its tone, one may have reservations about this or that, but one should admit that *Scrutiny* is one of the best literary journals of to-day. Why have the books of the *Scrutiny* group never been published in America? *Determinations, Fiction and the Reading Public, For Continuity, Revaluation,* are all among the first books I would recommend to anyone entering upon the serious study of literature. There is much more "new criticism" in them than in all the other works of the "new" school put together. Richards wrote *Practical Criticism* but *Scrutiny* was practical and criticized. Cleanth Brooks wrote notes for a new history of English poetry but in essay after essay *Scrutiny* accumulated a new history *in extenso*. Burke and Ransom extended the boundaries of critical discussion but *Scrutiny* actually occupied the territory and issued new maps. What a pity so many Americans think that the best British literary journal is *Horizon*'.

The bouquet, however, is qualified:

> 'Of course *Scrutiny* differs as widely from *Horizon* in its intentions as *KR* does from *Partisan Review*. Indeed *Scrutiny* is the most special and specialized journal of the four. Its offering of creative literature is negligible. Its coverage of foreign literature and of non-literary matters is haphazard and of uneven quality. The number of contributors to the magazine is very small, and of the happy few only three or four seem to have a character of their own; the others use the ideas of the editors as mechanical formulas'.

The qualifying nettles should stimulate us to even greater efforts at remedying the shortcomings we are conscious of. We don't, of course (and Mr. Bentley hardly suggests it) aim at making *Scrutiny* a vehicle for creative literature: that doesn't fall within our conception of the function we can most usefully undertake. The criticism that, to our sense, touches us most nearly is that regarding 'non-literary matters'; it seems to us we have given more, and more consistent, attention to music than any other non-specialist review and our music criticism has been intimately related to our literary. But if our provision under the head of 'non-literary matters' hasn't been stronger, that hasn't been for lack of the aim and endeavour. And here comes in a general consideration that Mr. Bentley's criticisms invite us to state: we have always been anxious to avoid the illusory 'offering': and the maintenance of any serious standards means, surely, that one can't even suppose—whatever one's illusions about oneself—that there are many possible contributors to choose from. Actually, we think that Mr. Bentley overstates the restriction in number; if he looks over the past dozen years of *Scrutiny* he will find (a guess—there is no time for research)

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the tale of contributors runs into three figures. And we have to add that the small nucleus of really *live* contributors to *The Kenyon Review* seems to us to comprise largely the same names as we remember from the *Southern* and have starred elsewhere.

As for the criticism that, in *Scrutiny*, 'the others use the ideas of the editors as mechanical formulas'—it would be interesting to have Mr. Bentley's detailed illustrations—it appears to us unjust, and to be based on a misconception, one encouraged by the account sedulously propaganded by our academic detractors. *Scrutiny* has no orthodoxy and no system to which it expects its contributors to subscribe. But its contributors do, for all the variety represented by their own positions, share a common conception of the kind of discipline of intelligence literary criticism should be, a measure of agreement about the kind of relation literary criticism should bear to 'non-literary matters', and, further, a common conception of the function of a non-specialist intellectual review in contemporary England. They are, in fact, collaborators (and unpaid). Here is the explanation of the survival of *Scrutiny* for fifteen years, and (if we may say so) of the influence it has, in spite of the fierce and mean hostility of the 'official' literary and academic worlds. If *Scrutiny* had had behind it nothing more positive than the idea of running a high-brow review (and our criticism of the *Kenyon*, as of the old *Southern* and the *Sewanee*, is that we have been able to discern nothing more positive behind them), then there would have been neither influence nor survival. There would certainly not have been the achievement that Mr. Bentley credits us with.

And as for foreign literature, we think we have been less inadequate than he might appear to suggest. But certainly we offer no such 'coverage' of Europe and America as *The Criterion* undertook. And it seems to us that if it can't be better done than *The Criterion* did it, then it is hardly worth offering. People, in those matters, are prone to be too easily impressed, and to take the pretension for something real. We, of course, should like to do much more than we have done to help in keeping open the lines of communication with other countries and cultures. But the essential thing, it seems to us, is to maintain standards; except in relation to standards, effectively present, nothing real *can* be done.

FOR WHOM DO UNIVERSITIES EXIST?

There are two contributions in particular that make the first number of *Universities Quarterly* (5/-) worth looking up—the contributions of Professors H. M. Chadwick and Denis Saurat to the symposium, 'Why compulsory philology?' Professor Chadwick, starting from the assumption (a decidedly heretical one in some influential quarters) that 'It is primarily for students that the universities exist', says, with his great authority, some admirably phrased things about the place of philology and 'history of the language' in university education. Of 'history of the language' he says:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'But the number of those who are really attracted by the subject has always been extremely small—probably well under five per cent. It is generally recognized that the demand for the subject is purely artificial and academic. One can learn to read, write and speak a language, and to appreciate literature, without any knowledge of it. On the other hand, much of the literature cannot be appreciated without a knowledge of history and cultural conditions—for which commonly no provision is made'.

Speaking of the 'English' imposed at many—at most—universities, he says:

'As they stand, the English courses are attempts to combine elements which are really incongruous. Anglo-Saxon studies gain nothing from their inclusion in the English course—except that they are forced upon a large number of people who do not want them.

The subject is treated as if it were "Old High German", and stripped of all the historical and cultural associations which are its chief value. It is time the universities recognized that an Antiquity worth studying is to be found, not only in Greece and Rome, but also in our own country; and this is the connection in which Anglo-Saxon should be studied, and also the early Celtic languages. But the great majority of the students who take English are interested only in modern literature. They gain nothing from Anglo-Saxon'.

That Professor Chadwick's achievement in his own chosen field is an illustrious one is well known. It would be pleasant if students for the English Tripos could be aware of the debt they owe to his disinterestedness, courage and insight. The general nature of this can be gathered from his article.

The drift of Professor Saurat's argument is suggested by these extracts:

'The ordinary cultured modern Frenchman cannot read French written before Pascal. Why should we try and produce English teachers of French who are better than the cultured French of to-day? We shall obviously not succeed'.

'The wealth of French literature since 1870 makes it an educational instrument of the highest value. The first and second years of a three years course (a minimum) ought to be devoted to a study of the French language—*as now used*—and of French literature from 1870 until to-day. During the third year only should the previous centuries be studied and some elements of philology inculcated'.

F.R.L.

BOOK NOT REVIEWED.

'MUSIC AND SOCIETY', by W. H. Mellers (Dobson, 8/6). This book is now out.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A PASSAGE TO PALESTINE

THIEVES IN THE NIGHT, by Arthur Koestler (*Macmillan*, 10/6).

Mr. Koestler's new novel will inevitably provoke comparison to its disadvantage, in both cases, with his own best novel, *Darkness at Noon*, a powerful work of art, and with Mr. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, since it too presents us with a picture of conflicting cultures under British rule and resembles *A Passage to India* not only in theme but sometimes in treatment as well. Suffering from its brevity and sketchy method, and from an unconvincing hero for transmitter, it gives little satisfaction as 'art'; but then the author calls it a Chronicle and we must take it for what it offers to be. There is a classic example of each of the opposite ways of presenting the victims of persecution so as to arouse sympathy, one by way of the novelist's art and the other by assembling first-hand documents, and Mr. Koestler's method falls short of the success of either. In Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*—surely one of the great novels of the world—we see how essential for this purpose bulk is, the slow building-up of sympathy with a nucleus of characters and of appreciation of the alien culture of which they are specimens. Werfel, a Viennese Jew, cannot have known the Armenian history from inside, but though we may suspect that the persecution of the Armenian race by the Young Turks nationalist movement and their resistance to annihilation was for him a symbol of the tragedy that was to take place in Europe (he wrote in 1932), yet that history is completely realized from within, and the beauty and value of that extraordinary ancient culture is conveyed by a wealth of convincing detail, duly subordinated it is true to the total artistic scheme. Mr. Koestler has sacrificed the advantages of a massive lay-out; he has moving passages and incidents but they are insufficiently prepared for. His purpose would have been advanced by a great deal more of such incidental pieces of cultural history as that of the Bokharian quarter of Jerusalem and the glimpses he gives of kabbalists and rabbis and of the history of Zionism. On the other hand, the title 'Chronicle' reminds us of the recent success of the objective method achieved by the anonymous author of *The Dark Side of the Moon*[1] in merely getting first-hand accounts of their experiences from Poles transported to the Soviet labour camps during the attempt to absorb Poland made by Russia after the Russo-German pact had been signed. These documents are linked together and placed in a total historical and geographical setting by the author with great skill, but the success of this overwhelming book depends on its not being art but raw fact that is offered us. Mr. Koestler has a good many fragments of unassimilated experiences of this kind in *Thieves in the Night*, but they don't, in that medium, tell as they

[1]Faber, 12/6.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

should—in contrast to the use of similar material in his last novel, *Arrival and Departure*.

In short, whereas *Darkness at Noon* has behind it, appropriately, the Conrad of *Nostromo* and *Under Western Eyes*, *Thieves in the Night* shows its author as not having completely absorbed Aldous Huxley, Dos Passos and E. M. Forster. He borrows the technique of *U.S.A.* to introduce a series of historical facts and documents into an otherwise stream-of-consciousness novel, but except for this useful trick, these novelists are not really at all *à propos*. Huxley is visible in some embarrassing gratuitous knowingness on the psycho-physical, but Koestler has first-hand experience of life, both varied and intense (for he has been peculiarly alive in the contemporary world) from which to evolve his theorizing and doesn't need Huxley's bookish smartness. Moreover, unlike Huxley and like Conrad, he respects life, and can sympathize with even very unsavoury people. In fact, he seems able to feel sympathy for almost everybody, even for the attitude of the old Arab who when reproached for not working the land like the hated settlers on the Dogs' Hill replies 'You speak like a fool. Is the hill here for me, or am I here for the hill?'—for everybody except Arab agitators and the English governing class.

This was perhaps his real link with Forster. For his presentment of the situation in Palestine had really nothing in common with the other writer's of the Indian problem, in spite of the external parallel between Jew-Arab-British Mandate rule and Hindu-Moslem-British Raj. The parallel has attracted some similar scenes. But there is an edge on the strain between the government representatives and the Hebrew settlers and between all three parties at the Arab peace-making ceremony which is absent from the bridge-party in *A Passage to India*, for Koestler writes from the under-dog's point of view while Forster is still one of the ruling caste, even though blushing for his compatriots' bad manners. Koestler lacks Forster's charm but he gains in seriousness. His comedy is grimmer and his criticism much keener—for instance, his criticism of Jewish characteristics goes much deeper than does Forster's of the English Public School type. And how much more memorable his court-scene, where the illegal immigrant, sentenced to imprisonment and routine deportation, acquires symbolic power with his deafness (due to a blow from a guard at Dachau) that makes the trial incomprehensible to him and with his haunting reiterated cry to the lawyer: 'Was ist los? Was hab' ich getan?'. Similarly the evasive mysticism that crops up in *A Passage to India* as that book's localisable weakness is replaced by Koestler's real advantage in having an objective, a traditional religious, mysticism for reference, emotionally impressive and rooted in the history of a race. The Social Democracy and Leninism of the young settlements is seen against a background of, sometimes pervaded by, the old religious forms and symbols. The book is held together by an inside account of life in a pioneer Commune, one of 'the hundred odd where individual property is completely

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vested in the community, where all men are really equal, and where you can live and die without ever having touched money'. [We are told that all reference to this successful working of rural Communism is banned in the Russian press.] This fascinating subject leads the narrator to make notes on the drift of culture represented in Palestine which are not the least interesting parts of the book. For instance, whereas the parents, he says, were 'the most cosmopolitan race of the earth', the children, native Palestinians, are what he calls 'Hebrew Tarzans'; he finds the new generation and what they stand for 'frightening'. He traces this cultural regression to the language they speak:

> 'Their parents were notoriously polyglot—they have been brought up in one language which had been hibernating for twenty centuries before being brought artificially back to life . . . Our children are brought up in a language which has not developed since the beginnings of the Christian era . . . And so this young generation is brought up in a language which suffers from loss of memory . . . the humanistic hormones of the mind are absent . . . In other words, they have ceased to be Jews and become Hebrew peasants'.

Finally Joseph the narrator is driven out of his paradise, the Commune, into the extremists' party by the pressure of the political situation (the book covers the years 1937 to 1939) and we are shown that from the inside too. We are made aware of the force of the arguments by which the methods of terrorism come to seem justified and inevitable—what the author calls 'the logic of the political ice-age'.

To return to the comparison with *A Passage to India*. *Thieves in the Night* will not have the same success, at least in this country, though it may well have, and for the same reasons, in the United States (there is a sympathetic American journalist in the book designed express). Mr. Forster's satire was not unacceptable: he accused the Anglo-Indians (old style) of nothing worse than bad manners and lack of imagination. Of the darker side of British rule in India he made no mention. And the English reader had, to sustain his complacency, the consciousness of the undeniable benefits that British rule had conferred on India. Mr. Koestler is less tactful and he is not charming. I predict a hostile Press. *A Passage to India* came at just the right time (1924): an enlightened public here was ready to feel guilty about India and had nothing much to distract it. Koestler's effort is too late as journalism: the English are long past the stage where they might profitably have felt guilty about the history of British trusteeship of Palestine. And now the atom bomb and the two hundred Russian divisions in Europe have driven the Palestine and the Jewish questions out of any conceivable foreground; they are merely a nuisance. Moreover, there is no longer a public conscience to appeal to; what Mr. Koestler calls sometimes the political and sometimes the moral ice-age is upon us. And there is further what

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he calls 'the law of universal indifference': 'for the conscience of mankind is a diffuse kind of vapour which only rarely condenses into working steam'. The value of this book will probably be what he calls it, that of a chronicle. Just as *The Dark Side of the Moon* records not only what Russia did [is doing] to Poles but what typical Soviet procedure is when the U.S.S.R. takes control of new territory. That is, a general as well as a particular contribution to social history.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

ELIOT'S HEIR

A MAP OF VERONA, by Henry Reed (*Cape*, 3/6).
THE GARDEN, by V. Sackville-West (*M. Joseph*, 8/6).

The exceptional unanimity of praise accorded to Mr. Reed's volume sends one back for a second look. The first had not recommended the quality of Mr. Reed's experience. Many of his poems seemed wordy failures, and several unambiguously bad. Yet Mr. Reed did not appear to be a very young man, a beginner, in whom errors of tone, emptiness of gesture, were to be ignored for the occasional successes of verbal talent, or the convincingness of a personal manner, no such signs having revealed themselves to me. I had decided that Mr. Reed's was merely another collection of verses published earlier in different periodicals. It was surprising therefore to find Mr. Reed generally acclaimed in terms suggested by the heading to this review. And now that second impressions have only confirmed the first, there is cause here for reflection on the kind of reading commonly given to Mr. Eliot's poetry, and the quality of that consensus which allows him the title 'great'. For the experience in Mr. Reed's book is of a paltry kind, and much of it innocently faked. The innocence is not only of this wheel-rumbling sort—

> I have changed my mind: or my mind is changed in me

but of this (perhaps less innocent) in an apostrophe to the city of Naples:

> You were an early chapter, a practice in sorrow,
> Your shadows fell, but were only a token of pain,
> A sketch in tenderness, lust, and sudden parting,
> And I shall not need to trouble with you again.

The same poem, 'A Map of Verona', concludes with the following wordplay:

> And in what hour of beauty, and what good arms,
> Shall I those regions and that city attain
> From whence my dreams and slightest movements rise?
> And what good Arms shall take them away again?

Several of the poems have a background of soldiering. Of these, the three poems in the group 'Lessons of the War' were an

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

indulgence to write. They are trivial in feeling, and abjectly self-regarding. The appropriate reader composes the poetry.

> Japonica
> Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens
> And today we have naming of parts.

Here, as elsewhere in the volume, the author is concerned to present himself in a favourable light, as a gallant fellow compromising whimsically with a hostile world.

> And in my time I have given them all I had,
> Which was never as good as I got, and it got me nowhere.
> And the various holds and rolls and throws and breakfalls
> Somehow or other I always seemed to put
> In the wrong place. And as for wars, my wars
> Were global from the start.

It is to the same kind of ingratiating trait that we must ascribe the parody of Eliot which looks like (and is) a prizewinning competition entry. It was possibly included to show the author's independence, for the collection is full of reminiscences, rhythmic and verbal, deliberate or otherwise, of Eliot; such as:

> These are my images. The place not worth describing.

And elsewhere of Auden (see the poem 'Morning'), and Sassoon (see 'Outside and In'). That a poet should wish to learn from Mr. Eliot is itself a favourable sign, but the use made here of such borrowings is nowhere justified, and the lack of content is the more painfully audible against the overtones of reminiscence in passage after passage. For example, the conclusion of 'Iseult La Belle':

> O you who will never be other than children,
> Do you think, if I could, I would not reach my hand,
> Through the burning mist and the echoing night of blackness,
> To bless you, soothe you, and guide you through your hell?

This passage, and the following, will suggest the facility of Mr. Reed's verse, and full of spurious imagery as of spurious rhythms. It is another quotation from 'Iseult La Belle'.

> I am she, the heart and centre of desire,
> The well-beloved, the eternally-reappearing
> Ghost on the lips of spring.
> And do you expect a face
> Calm at the heart of torment? Calmness in me, the fear
> Of all the poets who dreaded the passing of beauty,
> And called on Time to stay his decaying hand,
> And who, in their hearts, dreaded more than beauty's passing,
> Its perpetual arrest?
> I am that point of arrest;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Though I drop back into oblivion, though I retreat
Into the soft, hoarse chant of the past, the unsoaring, dull
And songless harmony behind the screen of stone,
I do not age.
But I come, in whatever season, like a new year,
In such a vision as the open gates reveal
As you saunter into a courtyard, or enter a city,
And inside the city you carry another city,
Inside delight, delight.
And it seems you have borne me always, the love within you,
Under the ice of winter, hidden in darkness.
Winter on winter, frozen and unrevealing,
To flower in a sudden moment, the bloom held high towards heaven,
Steady in the glowing air the white and gleaming calyx,
Lightness of heart.

Far from recalling the tension in the poetry of Mr. Eliot, this verse suggests a weak sensibility utterly wordy and smothered in its pretensions. Those hearts and that ghost, the decaying hand and the hoary chant, the city, the delight and the calyx, and above all the movement, are plainly unreal. Mr. Reed must be very easily satisfied. In some pages he has attempted the conciseness of symbol. The following is a quotation from one of these, 'The Wall', which has been favourably noticed:

The place where our two gardens meet
Is undivided by a street,
And mingled flower and weed caress
And fill our double wilderness,
Among whose riot undismayed
And unreproached, we idly played,
While unaccompanied by fears,
The months extended into years,
Till we went down one day in June
To pass the usual afternoon
And there discovered, shoulder-tall,
Rise in the wilderness a wall:
The wall which put us out of reach
And into silence split our speech.
We knew, and we had always known
That some dark, unseen hand of stone
Hovered across our days of ease,
And strummed its tunes upon the breeze.
It had not tried us overmuch,
But here it was for us to touch.

The inane movement here is not a stylization, but the best the author can do with octosyllabic couplets—his way of paying tribute to Marvell. Despite the 'double wilderness', it is anything but witty.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The symbol is not made clear but obscured by the 'dark unseen hand of stone' which 'hovers' and 'strums', nor is the function of the alliteration in the fourteenth line apparent. The symbol is obviously meant to have a wide and profound significance, for after ten more couplets the poem concludes:

> We need not doubt, for such a wall
> Is based in death, and does not fall.

This pompous clarification is the anti-climax to any intended solemnity; it is clearly a waste of time to search for foundation to that 'wall based in death'. The allegory of 'The Return' is even more facile and unfocussed. The groups of poems 'The Desert and 'Tintagel' are ambitious but entirely verbal; and both they and the other two long pieces 'Chrysothemis' and 'Philoctetes' contain a great deal of worked-up feeling. For example:

> The noiseless chant has begun in the heart of the wound,
> The heavy procession of pain along the nerve,
> The torture-music, the circling and approval
> Of the fiery dancers, the days of initiation,
> The surge through the heat to the babbling, sweaty vault
> Of muttering, unanswered questions, on,
> Through a catechism of ghosts and a toiling litany,
> To the ultimate sanctum of delirium, unremembered,
> The recapitulation of the bitterly forgotten,
> And then forgotten again in the break of day.

Mr. Reed's feelings have no centre, are not controlled. To expect a centre in a first volume is possibly to expect too much; a characteristic tone suggesting a more serious interest in writing poetry than the mere writing of it, would be encouragement enough. There is no such firmness of tone in this volume, but only fluency at low pressure. It is this fluency which is responsible for Mr. Reed's acceptance. But without a more impressive content his verse, despite its variety of forms, must remain a flashy claim for attention, of which it has already received more than it deserves.

It would be unfair however to suggest that his fluency had much in common with Miss Sackville-West's. The *T.L.S.* recalls that 'it is nearly twenty years since in *The Land* the author proved that Virgil's *Georgics* are a better model for poetry than the cacophonous school of modern algebraic verse'. The only excuse for noticing this tweedy sequel at all in these pages is that we need to be reminded (as by the animus of the last quotation) that, in Courses of English, 'The Land' is still too often the substitute for modern poetry. It has a suitable bulk and plentiful imagery for visualisers, and the author is still living. Though to read her one would not think so.

> What time the English loam is bare and brown,
> Elsewhere he roams . . .

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Sackville-West also has been reading Eliot, and she too has feelings of superiority about him, in expressing which she archly contemplates an assault on laws less optional than the unwritten ones.

> Would that my pen like a blue bayonet
> Might skewer all such cats'-meat of defeat;
> No buttoned foil, but killing blade in hand.
> The land and not the waste land celebrate.

Her credo is equally atavistic.

> Though I must die, the only thing I know,
> My only certainty so far ahead
> Or just around the corner as I go,
> Not knowing what the dangerous turn will bring,
> Only that some one day I must be dead.
> —I still will sing with credence and with passion
> In a new fashion
> That I will believe in April while I live.
> I will believe in Spring . . .

The misuse of language could not go further.

G. D. KLINGOPULOS.

MODERN POETIC DRAMA

THE POET IN THE THEATRE, by Ronald Peacock (Routledge, 10/6).

In this book Professor Peacock offers us a series of essays dealing with the relations between poetry and drama in the last hundred years or so. He has not attempted a comprehensive historical survey, nor does he restrict himself to drama in verse, and he is therefore free to concentrate on the significant figures. The authors discussed are chosen for their relation to the central questions: 'What, in the nature of dramatic poetry, accounts for its scarcity in certain conditions? Why did poetry come to terms with the theatre only in occasional flashes, and with the greatest difficulty, and in unorthodox ways, in the period under review?' The work of T. S. Eliot is taken as a point of departure, together with a consideration of Henry James and the Drama. This looks like an intelligent approach, and the reader's interest is further stimulated by a straightforward and authoritative style comparatively free from academic clichés and by the author's disinterested concentration on the subject under discussion. He makes first-hand judgments, takes for granted the importance of criticism, and seems to have no extra-literary axes to grind. These merits, though elementary, are not common, and they imply further that Professor Peacock raises a number of interesting questions in a way inviting serious consideration.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The most fundamental criticism seems to be that he has concentrated too narrowly on drama, not relating it closely enough to poetry as a whole or to the general state of literature and civilization during the period. It is, for example, an over-simplification to say that it was the prosaic realism derived from Ibsen, harmful as his influence may have been, which 'dried up poetry and style at the roots' so that the price paid for intellectual freedom was 'poetic life'. In English drama of the late nineteenth century there was no poetic life to be lost: its absence and the prosaic realism of the social problem plays are alike symptoms of more fundamental cultural disorders. I don't think Professor Peacock means to imply any such over-simplified view as this passage suggests, but a closer critical approach to the poetry of the period, non-dramatic as well as dramatic, would have helped him to bring out the deeper underlying causes. Similarly, the reason why he can see Eliot's changed style in the plays as 'a proper development and adaptation of his verse for the conditions of the theatre' is, I think, that he considers the dramatic element in the earlier poems mainly in terms of the creation of characters: 'After creating the "characters" of Sweeney and Prufrock and The Lady, it is but a step to Archbishop Becket and Harry Lord Monchensey'. But the most significant criticism of the verse of the dramas has been that it lacks the dramatic life of the verse of *Portrait of a Lady*, *Gerontion* and *The Waste Land*. This may be connected with the divergent development of Eliot's later poetry outside the theatre: re-reading *The Family Reunion* I feel that one reason for the unsatisfactory impression it leaves is its unsuccessful combination of a style which attempts to carry on from *Sweeney Agonistes* with one related to the very different method of *Four Quartets*. The inadequacy of Professor Peacock's critical treatment of poetry is seen again in his essay on Yeats, whose comparative failure as a dramatist is to be explained rather in terms of the undramatic nature of his verse than from any unpopularity of his symbolic technique or from 'the degree to which he sometimes refines away the material world in too many directions at once'. The objection to a passage of dialogue from *The Dreaming of the Bones* that here 'the poet flies too much in the face of the conditions of a spoken form' almost makes the point, but not quite. And a closer attention to the verse would, I think, have qualified the degree of superiority to Synge claimed for Yeats in his handling of the Deirdre legend.

The second main criticism of these essays is that they show no adequate realization of the nature of poetic drama in earlier periods. Not that Professor Peacock's approach is that of Bradley and William Archer: what I mean is perhaps most clearly shown in the following paragraph, which occurs in a defence of Yeats against criticism from the realistic angle:

> 'Drama had always depended on an action that took a natural form as it is observed in life. It seems almost to be a rudimentary condition of an art that is made up of impersonation,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> of presenting a picture of body and speech and behaviour. The logic of appearances; the close analytical plan with its explanation of relationships; the exposition of character and motive within a coherent moral order; the observation of time and space as they are accepted by common sense—all this is the foundation of Sophocles and Shakespeare, of Calderon and Corneille, of Molière and Congreve . . . Here, moreover, lies the common ground between drama in verse and drama in prose'.

The implications of this passage are brought out a little later when he says that in Yeats 'action is not an end in itself flowing from and dependent on what we call "character" ', and that with the special technique of the *Plays for Dancers* 'it is not only a question of stylization, of beautiful verse and design, supported by formal elements of chorus and ballet, ennobling an action from life'. One's comment is that this ennobling function hardly seems an adequate account of the 'stylization' of Greek drama, and that in Shakespeare at least there are several instances of action not 'an end in itself flowing from and dependent on . . . character'. Professor Peacock's remark on Yeats: 'The coherent action-sequence that illustrates essentially the *moral* nature of life gives place to a complex pattern communicating a spiritual insight' might be equally well applied to *The Winter's Tale*, and a recognition of Shakespeare's concern with 'symbolism' and his embodiment of 'spiritual insight' would have suggested standards by which to place Yeats. At the same time Professor Peacock is clearly not committed to 'realistic' notions in the narrow sense: in the essay on Eliot he applauds the restoration of conventions in general and that of verse in particular, though on the grounds that by their use Eliot has recovered for drama 'inwardness and detail in psychological portraiture'. In fact, one thing that this book illustrates is how far you can go in intelligent discussion of drama without taking into account the recent re-orientation in Shakespeare criticism; but there is a point where the limitation becomes obvious.

Most of the individual essays contain useful and relevant comments even where one disagrees with the general valuation. Professor Peacock overrates Eliot's dramatic achievement, but he gives a fair account of what was attempted in the plays. The essay on Henry James shows an adequate appreciation of the 'dramatic' element in the novels which appeared after his attempt on the theatre, but it follows the conventional over-estimate of the last three long works (can it really be said that as they get longer and longer they are 'more and more dramatic in conception and more and more concentrated'?) and the equivalent under-valuing of *The Awkward Age*. The relevance of the essay to the main theme lies in the fact that a sense of drama for which there was no room in the contemporary theatre found its outlet in the novel.

Professor Peacock then turns back to Grillparzer, as a survival of the last living school of poetic drama in Europe (that of Goethe and Schiller) and claims that he added to that tradition a new

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychological realism. He goes on to consider Hebbel's anticipation of Ibsen in *Maria Magdalena*, remarking pertinently: 'To begin to make tragedy relative is to begin eliminating it. The knowledge that "tragic" circumstances were fifty or a hundred years later no longer so neutralizes them'. The discussion of the 'Effects of Ibsen' is admirably direct in its placing of the whole problem-play tradition[1]—'a very powerful writer had a very wrong influence': what is not quite so convincing is the statement that the plays of Ibsen's middle period owe their extraordinary influence to the power of a technique built up in less limited forms of drama. Professor Peacock does not discuss *Brand*, *Peer Gynt* or the late plays in detail, contenting himself with the mere assertion that in them Ibsen is 'most dramatic and most poetic at one and the same time'. The short essay on Shaw is a fairly good appraisal of his methods and limitations, making quite clear the imaginative inferiority which invalidates any comparison (still not unusual) with Jonson or Molière.

The account of Tchehov gives a useful analysis of his technique and a fair description of his effects, but the high value assigned to his work hardly seems to follow as a logical consequence. For me at least this essay does not remove the suspicion that Tchehov's blend of satire and wistful pathos was a trick for having it both ways, masking a failure to reach a balanced attitude, an inability to resolve the emotional confusions of the ordinary sensitive person in the modern world. The presentation of him as 'a great idealist' is not convincing: 'Yet in the midst of frustration, even of comicality, these people are for the most part noble. Flat, bored, sterile, helpless, they never cease to break out in impulses towards universal love, happiness, the ideal, beauty in nature and beauty in man'. Lawrence, we remember, had a different word for it. Of Synge Professor Peacock rightly says that his art works within narrow limits and that it had little to offer to the development of drama in England: if he seems to under-estimate Synge's actual achievement it is rather by contrast with his high relative valuation of Yeats. The last dramatist considered is Hofmannsthal, whose most significant work is seen in *Jedermann* and *Das Grosse Welttheater*, where he takes up the popular traditions of morality-play and religious festival to express in poetry and ritual his religious and metaphysical conceptions.

The concluding discussion of Tragedy, Comedy and Civilization asserts that both tragedy and comedy have moral implications and that each is an element of civilized consciousness. It insists especially that 'moral assumptions are at the centre of tragedy', and that 'the tragic values are created by the philosophy and

[1]'Looking back now on the period that produced [Shaw, Galsworthy and the typical modern successes] it is incredible that it should ever have been called great'. The reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* seems to have thought that this was going a little too far.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

religion of society'. A poet attempting to create original tragic values sacrifices 'cohesion and emotional unity' in his audience, and all pathological or exceptional cases lose their tragic power. The dearth of tragic poetry in our age is 'a failure of civilized consciousness'. There are a number of illuminating remarks in this essay and it will be found more useful than most academic discussions of tragedy, but less than justice is done to the religious element in the tragic experience, the 'breaking of the dykes which separate man from man', the vindication of life at a profound impersonal level.

It can hardly be said that these essays offer a convincing answer to the questions raised in the preface and quoted at the beginning of this review, but at least they make a number of relevant points and suggest possible directions for further critical enquiry.

R. G. Cox.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

APOLLINAIRE. CHOIX DE POÉSIES, edited by C. M. Bowra (*Horizon*, 10/6).

APOLLINAIRE, by André Rouveyre (*Gallimard*, 120 *francs*).

Apollinaire's work is not so well known in England nor his reputation so established in France as to render superfluous a longer commentary than Professor Bowra's brief prefatory remarks to this first English edition. Nor are those remarks sufficiently cogent to answer any of the questions that arise from a perusal of this selection: 'songs which have all the ease and grace of the sixteenth century', 'alexandrines that will stand comparison with those of any French poet', 'the new nature of his material', 'his brilliant intellect', 'being quite free from any metaphysical or ethical prepossessions . . . Apollinaire relied above all on his sensibility', 'he wrote in a kind of ecstasy which made everything significant and exciting', 'the inexhaustible delight of living'—these are some of the things which suggest that Professor Bowra did not trouble himself greatly with definition in writing his preface. M. Rouveyre's long study might have supplied a need, but proved to be a tedious and uncritical hagiography. The portrait of Apollinaire (alias Wilhelm Apollinaris Kostrowitsky) as seen by M. Rouveyre and in the evidence of Apollinaire's letters, is not an interesting one, although he appears to have been something of a 'character' to his friends. 'Je ne prétends pas donner la clef de son être', writes M. Rouveyre. 'Il faudrait réfléchir longuement et prudemment pour en approcher. Encore y parviendrait-on sans assurance, car il était un homme mystérieux et inconnaissable. Il était aussi un dieu . . . La terre craquait sous la pression de son imagination. Nous avons craqué, parfois, tous deux, sous la pulsation de notre mutuelle action idéo-magnetique. Avec lui on

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

était dans la lune . . . Mieux que Dieu, qui fit, dit-on, un homme de rien, Apollinaire en fit beaucoup, lui, avec la même absence de matière'. Testimony of this sort, which abounds in M. Rouveyre's book, is plainly intended for the amorphous *hebdomadaire-littéraire* public, amongst whom primarily, the Apollinaire legend circulates. When M. Rouveyre makes a show of criticism, in his last chapter, he offers this: 'Sa suppression délibérée de toute ponctuation permettait encore à son jeu mental d'exprimer toutes les insinuations de sa pensée, toutes les inflexions généreuses de son beau délire conscient. Elle augmentait son oxygene et alors lui permettait de contenir la complexité, l'étrangeté, le nombre de ses aventures morales, spirituelles et verbales, comme en plein ether, hors du temps et de l'espace . . . '. 'Étant donné qu'il pratiquait une consommation d'astres inusitée à ce point jusque-là chez les poètes, et qu'il était le premier et le seul usager immodéré de tels itinéraires célestes . . . '.

Étant donné an earnest and attentive audience, *étant donné* a sincere post-war search for some construction upon which to rejoice, perhaps, M. Rouveyre hopes, he may interest us in a little Apollinaire? For example, in the spectacle of normal feelings turned inside out and stood on their head . . . 'Oh que la guerre est jolie!' The blurb slips easily into cathartic metaphor: 'They are rich in those tonic mineral salts of intellectual vitality and the courageous welcoming of experience that most contemporary poetry lacks, and which recall the buoyant spring-time of the age'. 'C'est au sens de Virgile que je dis "je chante" quand je le dis—arma virumque cano'. The last quotation is from Aragon, who, we know, has done for this war what Apollinaire did for the last.

Not that Apollinaire hadn't more genuineness than his imitator. He was probably an amusing companion and quite a brave man. But our concern is with his poetry, and the major claims made for it in this English selection; in which Apollinaire appears as a kind of clown in verse, blest with a strong constitution and high spirits but little capacity for interesting experience or for writing poetry. 'On admirait cet air de ténor marseillais d'opéra-comique qu'il avait', writes M. Rouveyre. ' . . . Comme un véritable Athénien, Guillaume négligeait cette pudeur, à propos de rien, qui est la maladie chrétienne. Il était naturel et voilà tout . . . Apollinaire a fait, jusqu'au zénith, les plus éblouissantes pirouettes, et ce clown divin y emportait toujours avec lui son coeur intrépide'.

It was to be expected therefore that the relationship which he perceives between different levels of experience, his use of simile and metaphor, should be trivial. A surprising image justifies itself only if it immediately fixes and makes accessible a state of thought and feeling, and discloses more and more meaning as it is contemplated and accepted. It suggests the degree of control of the writer over his subject matter, the status of what is taking place. The simile 'like a patient etherized upon a table' is acceptable because it has this complexity, relevant to the ironic intention of the poem. The image suggests the sprawled glow of evening, the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tiredness, the quality of mental activity at the end of the day, a suffused fading pinkness underlined by the horizon, resembling the misty but luminous unconsciousness of ether, combined with the pungency and the orange flavour of the liquid, and the impression of surgical analysis in what is to follow. But the typical images of Apollinaire:

'Souvenirs qui n'en faites plus qu'un
Comme cent fourrures ne font qu'un manteau'

'L'éternel avion solaire'

'Les virilités des héros fabuleux érigées comme des pièces contre avions'

'La religion seule est restée toute neuve la religion
Est restée simple comme les hangars de Port-Aviation'

—have the same simple-minded pointlessness as Mr. Spender's pylons 'bare like nude giant girls that have no secret'. These images express not command of experience but the opposite, some pettiness in the impulse to write; and their failure is important in proportion to the amount of emphasis with which they are offered. Apollinaire's novelties are invariably thrown down with some violence, a challenging tone which betrays confused or ingenuous motives, and, reading them, the conviction grows that the stock word 'puéril' with which M. Rouveyre expresses his admiration of the 'mineral salts', would also be applicable to Apollinaire in the current meaning of its English equivalent.

There is reason enough for quoting at length from some of the poems which the fascination of a foreign tongue has led Professor Bowra to admire. The following is a complete poem.

Le Chant D'Amour

Voici de quoi est fait le chant symphonique de l'amour
Il y a le chant de l'amour de jadis
Le bruit des baisers éperdus des amants illustres
Les cris d'amour des mortelles violées par les dieux
Les virilités des héros fabuleux erigées comme des pièces contre avions
Le hurlement précieux de Jason
Le chant mortel du cygne
Et l'hymne victorieux que les premiers rayons du soleil ont fait chanter à Memnon l'immobile
Il y a le cri des Sabines au moment de l'enlèvement
Il y a aussi les cris d'amour des félins dans les jungles
La rumeur sourde des sèves montant dans les plantes tropicales
Le tonnerre des artilleries qui accomplissent le terrible amour des peuples
Les vagues de la mer où naît la vie et la beauté
Il y a le chant de tout l'amour du monde

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On one page, under the title 'Il Pleut', several dotted lines are printed vertically which on a second glance, prove to be words. These, if deciphered and transcribed in horizontal lines, discover poetry that has 'the clarity, the ease, the force of all good French verse', previously obscured by 'lyrisme visuel'. The result, after that, is disappointing. 'In "Les Soupirs du Servant de Dakar" he sketches with poignant insight the feelings of an African soldier torn from his primitive pastoral life to the violent and unintelligible routine of the trenches'. The following extracts represent more than half of this poem.

Je revois mon père qui se battit
Contre les Achantis
Au service des Anglais
Je revois ma soeur au rire en folie
Aux seins durs comme des obus
    Et je revois
Ma mère la sorcière qui seule du village
    Méprisait le sel
Piler le millet dans un mortier
Je me souviens du si délicat si inquiétant
    Fétiche dans l'arbre
Et du double fétiche de la fécondité
Plus tard une tête coupée
Au bord d'un marécage
O pâleur de mon ennemi
C'était une tête d'argent
Et dans le marais
C'était la lune qui luisait
C'était donc une tête d'argent
. . . . . .
J'ai connu l'affût au bord des marécages
Où la girafe boit les jambes écartées
J'ai connu l'horreur de l'ennemi qui dévaste
    Le Village
    Viole les femmes
    Emmène les filles
Et les garçons dont la croupe dure sursaute
. . . . . .
Je me souviens d'un lac affreux
Et de couples enchaînés par un atroce amour
    Une nuit folle
    Une nuit de sorcellerie
    Comme cette nuit-ci
Où tant d'affreux regards
Éclatent dans le ciel splendide.

So much for the poignancy and the pastoral. The poem is fairly obviously the product of a lurid and commonplace imagination. 'He sought new adventures in the world and believed, as "Les

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Collines'' shows, that we should look for new possibilities in human nature and that if we can maintain the strength of our desires, we shall be greatly rewarded . Let the verses 'show' for themselves:

Certains hommes sont des collines
Qui s'élèvent d'entre les hommes
Et voient au loin tout l'avenir
Mieux que s'il était le présent
Plus net que s'il était passé
. . . . .
Et j'ai scruté tout ce que nul
Ne peut en rien imaginer
Et j'ai soupesé maintes fois
Même la vie impondérable
Je peux mourir en souriant
. . . . .
Habituez-vous comme moi
A ces prodiges que j'annonce
A la bonté qui va régner
A la souffrance que j'endure
Et vous connaîtrez l'avenir
. . . . .
Des bras d'or supportent la vie
Pénétrez le secret doré
Tout n'est qu'une flamme rapide
Que fleurit la rose adorable
Et d'où monte un parfum exquis.

And so on for some forty vatic stanzas. That Apollinaire considered himself one of the 'collines' and a large one, he does not leave in doubt, and he is accepted as such by his editor. 'In ''La Jolie Rousse'', written at the end of his life, he justified his case'. For example, with this:

Nous ne sommes pas vos ennemis
Nous voulons nous donner de vastes et d'étranges domaines
Où le mystère en fleurs s'offre à qui veut le cueillir
Il y a là des feux nouveaux des couleurs jamais vues
Mille phantasmes impondérables
Auxquels il faut donner de la réalité
Nous voulons explorer la bonté contrée énorme où tout se tait
Il y a aussi le temps qu'on peut chasser ou faire revenir
Pitié pour nous qui combattons toujours aux frontières
De l'illimité et de l'avenir
Pitié pour nos erreurs pitié pour nos péchés
. . . . . .
Mais riez riez de moi
Hommes de partout surtout gens d'ici

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Car il y a tant de choses que je n'ose vous dire
Tant de choses que vous ne me laisseriez pas dire
Ayez pitié de moi

'Il y a tant de choses . . . ' Yet Apollinaire would have been the last poet to be struck dumb at the vision of the ineffable. A writer could not be more perfunctory or set a higher price on the least of his own creations. For him, of course, there is some excuse. But what is to be made of an invitation such as the following: 'Apollinaire, like Rilke and Eliot and Pasternak'? Some doubts must be felt concerning the purposes for which this Big Four is assembled. These doubts Professor Bowra's preface does not remove. There, the impression is given that the writer is protected, by some preconception of the appropriate response, from that open contact with the work under examination, which alone would reveal its quality. When the line 'les becs de gaz pissaient leur flamme au clair de lune' is served up, the editor stomachs it with the uneasy equivocation that 'some may think that he sacrifices charm to exactness, though they can hardly fail to admit that he does at least succeed in being exact'. The line was certainly enough to upset even a thoroughgoing taste for 'le mot juste'. Such a taste may be useful in the translation and construing of texts, but it is of little relevance to the act of reading and judging a poem as a whole.

G. D. KLINGOPULOS.

THE SIGHTS OF CONEY ISLAND

THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE, by Henry Miller (Editions Poetry London, 10/6).

'Everything is sordid, shoddy, thin as pasteboard. A Coney Island of the mind'. (Henry Miller).

Whatever is decaying or physically disagreeable always catches Mr. Miller's eye. Under the impression that this constitutes 'cosmological vision', he is naturally impelled to let us share it, and when by doing so he can also tidy-up odds and ends of manuscript and produce a book, price 10/6, who can object to the practical streak in his generosity? No one needs be surprised by Mr. Miller's single-minded interest in what is moribund or rotten, nor in the proportion of his writing devoted to a detailed examination of it. Mr. Miller's view of the artist's function at the present time explains his enthusiasm. 'If you are an artist', he says, 'you have one consolation which is denied the others: *you can play the role of undertaker*'. His apparent fascination is simply a warm, professional interest. If he is obsessed with what is putrescent, it is in the interests of hygiene, and his task, like that of a burying beetle, is to search for the corpse and dispose of it. This view of the nature of his calling doubtless explains also the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disproportionate time which Mr. Miller spends investigating those places in which rot is most likely to be found.

One would not wish to quarrel with Mr. Miller's occupation as an undertaker, if he were to set about it in a more efficient way. But, given a corpse, to bury it decently and neatly is the last thing he wishes to do. He must examine it minutely, poke it and pry into it, anxious that he shall be spared no refinement of nausea; having left it until it stinks, he gives it a vigorous shaking and then goes into raptures of disgust and moral indignation over its corruption. This practice makes one doubt his professional ability, and the blustering, hearty, back-slapping manner which he consistently adopts while going about his business is the reverse of the discreet, self-effacing and seemly behaviour which one has a right to expect of a good undertaker.

Those who mistake loudness for forcefulness, vulgarity for vigour, 'push' for personality and boisterousness for energy, may be impressed by this bit of book-making; others will find that time spent in reading it passes slowly, that the catalogues of what are intended to be highly charged, physically revolting images, are as lifeless as a page of the telephone directory. The slightly more competent autobiographical journalism palls quickly as Mr. Miller passes from extravagance to extravagance, unceasingly insisting on what *I* think, what *I* saw, what *I* felt, what a MAN *I* am, through pages and pages of dreary reminiscence. It would be well, however, if those who are impressed by Mr. Miller's excited bawling were to examine closely both his prose and his criticism at those points where an unambiguous statement is made. There it will be found that underneath the surface turbulence, a common-place mind is at work in a common-place way. For example, speaking of re-reading the 'truly great authors' he says (rightly of course, but with the tone of our public literary purveyors) that 'we go back to them again and again as to inexhaustible wells of wisdom and delight', that 'a book is a part of life . . . The deep hidden rhythm of life is always there—that of the pulse, the heartbeat'. This, with trimmings, is the measure of his critical activity. Turning to his prose, one finds, as one might expect, that the 'deep hidden rhythm of life' is something which Mr. Miller has read about in D. H. Lawrence, and which must be conveyed in a lush 'aesthetic' prose, or alternatively in staccato 'conversational' bursts enlivened frequently with an expletive (Sometimes expressively rendered ' . . . ' in this edition). A short quotation of the former sort will show adequately its soporific quality:

> 'I have a tremendous longing for this land that lies at the end of the earth, this irregular spread of earth like an alligator basking. From the heavy, sexless lid of her batted eyes there emanates a deceptive, poisonous calm. Her yawning mouth is open like a vision. It is as if the sea and all who had been drowned in it, their bones, their hopes, their dreamy edifices, had made the white amalgam which is England'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The whole is informed with a sense of self-importance which makes such commonplace ineptness appear absurd. Mr. Miller has no sense of proportion where he himself is concerned; perhaps for this reason the autobiographical note at the end is the most enjoyable piece of work in the book. There we are led through an unconscious parody of the orthodox 'success story'—'I defied my parents and those about me almost from the time I was able to talk . . . Two years later my father gave me the money to go to Cornell; I took the money and disappeared with my mistress, a woman old enough to be my mother . . . The most important encounter of my life was with Emma Goldman in San Diego, California. She opened up the whole world of European culture for me . . . I quit the job without a word of notice, determined to be a writer. From then on the real misery began . . . '. 'I was obliged to beg in the streets . . . ' etc. But after exposing himself to 'life itself, the life of the streets especially' and reading omnivorously (Proust and Spengler were 'tremendously fecundating') he has realized that his 'aim, in writing, is to establish a greater REALITY' ('I am at bottom a metaphysical writer'), and wants 'to be read by less and less people'. Unfortunately, like his activities as an undertaker, his activities as an esoteric metaphysician are likely to be thwarted by his nature. It's the publicity man in him which frustrates his best intentions.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

THE ENGLISH KAFKA

THE CULT OF POWER, essays by Rex Warner (John Lane, The Bodley Head, 7/6).

This is on the whole, an inoffensive book. Many of the essays deal with the plight of civilization in the spirit and manner of an enlightened editorial in a superior weekly. Mr. Warner's sweep is so broad and his statements so general that most of the world's *hommes de bonne volonté* could give a vague assent. The trouble is, that the response evoked by statements such as these, for example,

> 'Since the age is superstitious we do not even achieve a life that can be called either scientific or efficient; we merely pay lip-service to what is vaguely understood to be admirable, and are encouraged at every turn to accept the advice of people whom we think of as "experts". There is an expert on the atom, an expert on astronomy, an expert on milk marketing and on housing, but there are no experts on how to live, and it seems that this is a subject in which we are not greatly interested'.

is as hackneyed as the writer's prose. All this has been said before

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and said more forcibly by others. Our task *is*, as Mr. Warner says, 'to enquire what man is, which of his ideals are admirable, which of his habits permanent, and what can be the meaning and purpose of his existence'. That is, our task is not to formulate 'vague and inefficient generalities', but to proceed with the inquiry. Mr. Warner may be about to address himself to this task in a later work. In these prize essays he throws out one suggestion—that D. H. Lawrence has nothing to offer us in the pursuit of such an enquiry.

Since this is a judgment that would be endorsed by many of those who would subscribe to the vaguely liberal generalities that fill the book, since Mr. Warner is in this as in so much else merely a watery mouthpiece of contemporary 'enlightened' opinion, there is a clear call for a rejoinder. D. H. Lawrence would provide one of the most inspiring and profitable starting points for any such fundamental inquiry as Mr. Warner desiderates, and is, in my opinion, a far healthier instance than Yeats, of whom Mr. Warner approves, of the value of an artist's prescience about the spiritual state of the world. In any 'revaluation'—and it seems to me that *Scrutiny* would be doing a service by publishing one—D. H. Lawrence would be seen to deserve even more than the generous praise accorded to him by E. M. Forster in his celebrated letter to the *Nation and Athenæum*.

The *Nation* and the *Athenæum* both disappeared: their modern avatar is the *New Statesman and Nation* in which Mr. Warner's treatment of D. H. Lawrence was passed with approval. To indicate the urgency of a reasoned judgment appealing to disinterested opinion, I append a few extracts from Mr. Warner's verdict. In an essay whose theme seems to be that the Tragic Hero in our days is a Moral Anarch, who, after destroying the old system of values, 'can only preserve his confidence by more and more outrageous rebellion, while those who have almost automatically followed him begin to regret the absence of the familiar images he has destroyed', D. H. Lawrence is cited as an author in whose work the state of mind of the Anarch and his followers can be interestingly exemplified. Lawrence 'had rejected both the system of the past and the lack of system of the present. What was he to do? He attempted to build up a new system for himself and others' which 'was very largely negative, a mere assertion of his denial of the system of his upbringing'. 'The corner-stone of his new system' was the sexual instinct. 'His insistence on blood and sex and maleness is all very well as an individual protest; but it lacks something in order to be a creed that is to bind men together, to give them the assurance which they lack. Men have gone to bed with women for very many years now, and have usually enjoyed it. But this enjoyment is not sufficient in itself to form the basis of a new outlook on life, and Lawrence himself seems to have been uneasily conscious of this'. 'Meanwhile, Hitler and others all over Europe, actuated in part by the same feelings that had moved Lawrence, were evolving a much more successful and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

destructive system of ideals. They, too, had inherited the legacy of the moral anarchists; they, too, had revolted against the past and yet felt the insecurity, hated the dissipation of the present. In their system also we find the "dark" forces of Lawrence—blood, sex, virility, violence—but these forces are now no longer centred in the sexual nature of the individual. The consciousness of revolt is still present, but now it is allied with a security that Lawrence never felt. The community to which Lawrence looked forward, the leaders and the led, is established. Men act, instead of wasting their energies in abstract thought. And yet, if Lawrence had seen it, he would have been appalled'. There are abundant signs that this monstrous conception of Lawrence is representative.

The representative quality of the essays is equally apparent in the strictly literary criticism. Mr. Warner also writes traditionally, notably in defence of the Classics. His style throughout the book is in fact the literary, scholarly style, lacking in vigour, faintly mannered, and ridiculous if read aloud. Often it reads as if he were writing for readers who haven't had Mr. Warner's educational advantages, but he wouldn't for the world have them know that he knew it. Here is a snippet, taken at random.

> 'Few can have watched their step more carefully than Swift. About him there is an almost terrifying precision. He has little of the humanity of Bunyan, none of the gentleness of Cervantes. His unique quality is that *saeva indignatio*, the savage indignation that is like a white-hot fire in which his immensely powerful style is forged'.

By confining myself to the book under review, I have felt justified in writing of Mr. Warner as a decent, well-meaning, but rather feeble *vulgarisateur* of current 'enlightened' ideas. The publisher's dust cover reminds me that Rex Warner is the author of four novels now appearing in a uniform edition and that V. S. Pritchett has praised them. Even so, this information would not have seemed worth passing on were it not that last year a critical miscellany appeared (containing contributions by young writers representing a fair cross section from *Scrutiny* to *Horizon*) which devoted almost half its space to a symposium on 'Kafka and Rex Warner'. The serious consideration there given and the numerous references to contemporary practice make the incredible appear true: Mr. Warner has a genuine vogue in England as an allegorist. So perhaps I should add that those who regard Mr. Warner as the English Kafka will find in the present book an authoritative essay on the allegorical method, showing that it 'is used more or less by all great writers' (including Dostoievsky, Dickens and Plato) and that authors such as these, 'because they include more in their survey and, in doing so, blend the poetic truth of their allegory with the prosaic truth of conventional observation' are in a sense ' "greater" than the purer allegorists, like Kafka'.

H. A. MASON.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RECORDS

BARTOK: *Quartet No.* 5 (played by the Hungarian Quartet, H.M.V.).

STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka* (London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Ernst Ansermet, Decca).

MAHLER: *Symphony No.* 4 (Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Bruno Walter, H.M.V.).

WALTON: *Viola Concerto* (William Primrose and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by the composer, H.M.V.).

BACH: *Concerto for two violins and orchestra* (Arthur Grumiaux, Jean Pougnet, and the Philharmonia String Orchestra conducted by Walter Susskind, Columbia).

HAYDN: *Symphony No.* 104 *in D* (Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Issay Dobrowen, H.M.V.).

WAGNER: *Die Walküre, Act* 3 (Helen Traubel, Herbert Janssen, Metropolitan Opera Choir and Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York conducted by Artur Rodzinski, H.M.V.).

ELGAR: *Cello Concerto* (Casals and the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult, H.M.V.).

HANDEL: *The Messiah* (Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Malcolm Sargent, with the Huddersfield Choral Society and James Johnson, Norman Walker, Gladys Ripley, Isobel Baillie, Columbia).

The outstanding recordings in this quarter's batch are the Bartók, the Mahler, and the Stravinsky. The performances are all characterized not only by great virtuosity, but by their authenticity; one feels they are as close an approximation to the composer's intentions as human fallibility is ever likely to permit. I don't know whether it is an unexpectedly encouraging Sign of the Times that H.M.V. should have chosen to issue the Bartók at the cheaper price; in any case it is a gesture that merits every possible encouragement. Bartók's *Fifth* is a work that used to be considered among his most aggressively and uncompromisingly angular; it still sounds as fresh and vital as it did ten years ago but (seen in the light of his later and ripest work) it now impresses us with the sensuous beauty of its sound texture, combined with the inexorable logic of its thought. I cannot imagine a more sympathetic, or more competent, performance than that of the Hungarian Quartet. These records should on no account be missed.

Bruno Walter's performance of the Mahler is equally convincing and it is to be hoped that before he retires he will add to his existing recordings of Mahler's works his performance of the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eighth Symphony (the culmination of Mahler's achievement), so that the authentic Mahlerian tradition may be preserved before it is too late. The *Fourth* is, of course, the 'easiest' of Mahler's symphonies; but it is a lovely work and provides a revealing illustration of the transition from Viennese classicism to Mahler's own late work and then to the atonalists.

The recording of both these works is worthy of the performances; that of the Stravinsky has by now achieved an almost international celebrity. It has been said that mechanically these are the best records ever made and I, not being especially well-informed in gramophonic history, wouldn't quarrel with that. Stravinsky's wonderful score deserves the close attention to details of aural effect which this recording gives it, and as a whole the music wears very well. Now that we are able to hear the elaborate texture so lucidly performed with sensitivity and precision, we can see clearly why *Petrouchka* is of such crucial importance in Stravinsky's development; beneath the apparent exoticism this is the first work of Stravinsky which gave intimation of the linear approach representative of his later music.

The two supreme exponents of their respective instruments, Primrose and Casals, give us two 'late romantic' English concertos. Elgar's elegiac work seems to me perhaps his quintessential achievement; and after listening to Casal's performance (followed perhaps by some of his unaccompanied Bach) one is inclined to think that he may be the greatest performer on any instrument living in our time. Comparatively Primrose, though his virtuosity in the scherzo is electric, seems insensitive and lacking in character; but one must remember of course that Walton's concerto, if still the composer's most impressive work, is hardly in the same street as the Elgar; and that Primrose's magnificent performance of the solo part in Berlioz's *Harold in Italy* certainly revealed that he is capable of responding to a melodic line of the greatest subtlety of contour.

The recording of the Walton tends to a 'modern' stridency, as does that of the new versions of the Haydn and, to a lesser degree, the Bach. These are both fine vigorous performances, and one particularly welcomes the use of the harpsichord continuo in the Bach. Issay Dobrowen is a conductor of high intelligence and imagination; one's only regret is that he did not choose to play one of the many unrecorded Haydn symphonies rather than the superb but well-known D major.

One may feel sad too that so much wax and time and money should have been spent on another version of the *Messiah* when so much music of the Bach period and earlier still awaits recording. (When is something going to be done for Alessandro Scarlatti?). But I suppose there was a need for a good 'modern' recording of the *Messiah*, and on this one much care has been lavished both from a mechanical and interpretative standpoint. Unlike the recent version of *Dido and Aeneas*, these records are admirably faithful to Isobel Baillie's voice; and the recording courageously refuses to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pander to the nineteenth century taste for the gargantuan in performances of Handel. On the other hand I cannot say that this performance impresses—as do the records referred to earlier in this review—by its authenticity. Mozart's additional orchestrations are used—quite illegitimately in a performance making any pretence of integrity; and little attempt is made to substitute contemporary eighteenth century practice for nineteenth century convention; (the overture for instance is emasculated through the omission of the double dots). A whole act of mature Wagner, even though one may think it smells a bit 'high', gives one an opportunity to re-assess the phenomenon of Wagner's genius—for genius he certainly was, even if a wicked one. The singing, especially that of Janssen, is in the true Wagnerian tradition, though I'm told that the tradition isn't what it was in the old days. There's enough of it left, however, for English people to feel that, in basing reconsideration of Wagner on these records, they won't be doing him too much of an injustice.

W.H.M.

SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, Downing College, Cambridge; distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge; and printed by S. G. Marshall & Son, Round Church Street, Cambridge, England.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED